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CHERRY ISLE

By

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TO
MY GODSON
CUTHWIN

Cherry Isle

CHAPTER I

Cherry-ripe, ripe, ripe I cry,
Full and fair ones, come and buy.
—HERRICK.

CHARLES GARSTON had told the chauffeur of the taxi in which he was driving to "hurry along as quickly as possible."

He had only ten minutes in which to cover a distance that should have taken at least twelve. And he hated to be hurried; it was bad for his nerves, bad for his temper, and he always said bad for his voice.

And his voice was he—or he was his voice, whichever way you like to put it.

For Charles Garston, good-looking, rather lazy, tall and perfectly healthy, was at twenty-six considered by many people to be the best tenor in Europe. And if not the leading tenor, his voice was wonderful enough to charm the nether world up into light, or to bring the dwellers in the light down into the darkness, if he chose to raise that voice in the gloom.

But there was one thing wrong with him.

He had succeeded too soon and too easily. All doors had opened to him at his knock; he had not had

to wait on thresholds in the cold and dark, with the piercing east wind of neglect cutting into the vitals of his soul and murdering his belief in himself. The world had fallen down before him, and worshiped.

He leaned back now against the cushions of the open taxi, and his handsome face was marred ever so slightly by this same success.

Seven minutes to twelve.

His train left for Manchester at three minutes to the hour. He could afford to offend many people, but he could not afford to offend the great Manchester audience that would wait any number of hours if only at the end of the waiting it could hear him sing.

Ah, nearly a block; but by a clever defiance of all rules of courtesy and the road, the chauffeur slipped past the long line of waiting vehicles and turned in at St. Pancras Station at three and a half minutes to the hour.

Charles Garston, hurried from all his usual leisure, was out of the taxi before it stopped, and racing down the platform at top speed a second or so afterwards.

The chauffeur was about to follow his fare into the station, but something which glittered yellow on the seat caused him to change his mind, and drive away as rapidly as possible.

"Gent might have made a mistake and be comin' back for it," he muttered.

But Charles Garston never made mistakes of this sort; he was an excellent man of business, and combined a clearness of brain with the genuine artist's nature in an exceptional manner. It was only very

occasionally that he allowed his emotions to run away with him.

He now jumped into the first open door and made his way along the corridor until he came to a first-class empty smoking compartment. He found a comfortable seat and then noticed that the train had not begun to move.

It was more than three minutes late in starting, and he need not have been in all that confounded hurry.

By Jove, it *was* too bad of the railway Johnnies to play the fool with the time-tables in this manner! It was disgraceful to make a man race like that! Why, it would reduce the range of his voice by a semitone and give him indigestion; besides the taxi might have collided with something, and let him in for he didn't know how much in fines, and he stood in no need of cheap advertisement.

At this point, his temper getting the better of him, he put his head out of the window and demanded of a porter who chanced to be strolling past the reason of the delay.

"See here, why doesn't this thing start; it's nearly seven minutes late?"

"No, sir," was the stolid answer, "it's due off in a minute now; time-tables alter in May, sir. You've looked it out in a back number."

Garston sat down fuming; it would have been bad if it had been the company's fault, being his own made it much worse.

At last they were off, and the smooth and rapid motion combined with the smoking of a cigarette began

to calm the young man's temper, and by the time Hendon was reached he was nearly in his normal frame of mind of general satisfaction with himself and the world at large.

A good lunch finished the process, and by the time Bedford was passed he had forgotten his irritation.

He leaned back in the carriage, watching rather dreamily the fair and pleasant country through which the train was passing. The country hedges were white with hawthorn, the crab apple trees raised their crests dressed in daintiest pink and white, the fields were white with daisies, and here and there a patch of blue-bells gleamed like a scrap of fallen sky; and the cowslips raised their heads on the banks past which the train was gliding.

It was lovely, it was peaceful, but presently he would pass into the land where commerce had touched all the beauties of God with smoke-grimed hand—and then he would go to sleep; at present it was worth keeping awake just to see England in her late spring garments.

Ah, the cherry orchards now, lovelier and richer if less dainty than the early apple blossoms!

And as Garston leaned forward and gazed with delighted eyes on the trees, the train gradually slowed up, and then stopped, although there was no station in sight. He put his head out of the window, and all the passengers in the other compartments did the same.

A guard explained that there had been an accident further down the line, that the signals were against them, and that although a gang of workmen was clear-

ing the line there would certainly be a delay of two hours, perhaps more.

Two hours! Garston looked at his watch. He would just have time to keep his engagement; in the meantime he would go for a walk and have tea somewhere.

He climbed up the bank, scrambled through the hedge and found himself in a quiet road, which he crossed; then climbing over a stile, he struck into a footpath.

The east wind, that part and parcel of an English spring, was blowing very gently, and its fresh sweetness and chilliness played about the head of the famous singer as he strolled onwards.

Up one hill, down another, and then into the land of cherry trees. A small, thatched farm peeped out from a little copse of ash trees, and before him orchard after orchard stretched away over the gently sloping hill and crowning the summit seemed to melt into the wind-swept blue sky.

"This will do," said Garston to himself; "no one else seems to have come along this way, and I can have tea and go back again."

Still walking slowly, for the air was too lovely to waste a moment in hurrying through it, the singer strolled along under the trees, and opening a little gate, made his way up to the farm. It was all as it should be, latticed windows, thatched roof, climbing plants and primroses.

Garston stamped on the stone before the door, and immediately the latter was opened by a young and

comely woman, who looked at him with surprise in her gray blue eyes.

"What are you pleased to want, sir?" she asked.

"The express has to halt for about two hours," he said genially, "and your cherry land looked so lovely that I came through it in search of tea. *Could* you let me have some—just anything?"

"We don't provide tea," retorted the young woman, haughtily; "if you want tea you must go down to the village."

"But I haven't time," explained Garston patiently, "and I particularly want to see how tea tastes when drunk beneath these lovely trees."

Into the woman's eyes there came a gleam of amusement.

"It'll taste the same as in the village," she said quickly; "we all buy it from the same place. You can walk right on under these trees, sir, and you can't miss the inn."

"You are cruel," said Charles Garston reproachfully, "here am I asking, in this land of delight, for tea, and you send me away. I won't pay for it, if that would make you feel better. Why Herrick himself must have lived here when he wrote his song."

And then Garston, half because the day was so lovely, half because he wanted his tea just at this particular moment in this particular place, began to sing softly:

Cherry-ripe, ripe, ripe I cry,
Full and fair ones, come and buy.
If so be you ask me where
They do grow? I answer, There,

Where my Julia's lips do smile.
There's the land of cherry isle,
Whose plantations fully show
All the year, where cherries grow.

He sang through the verses half under his breath, and as he sang he forgot his tea, and looked up at the masses of white blossom above him.

When he had finished the song he turned round. The young woman was leaning against the door, her eyelids lowered, and her whole face alive with delight. Behind stood a tall, well-grown young man, dressed roughly in shirt and trousers; he had placed one hand on the woman's shoulder and the smile on his face was one of sheer bliss.

Garston waited, both pleased and touched.

The woman looked up at him, and her eyes were moist with tears of pleasure.

"You shall have tea, sir, under the tree with the thickest blossoms," she said; "in fact you shall have as many teas as you like. I *never* heard any one sing like that before."

"You're welcome to the best we have," added the young man. "My wife and I," and his voice was full of dignified hospitality, "are but farming folk; but we love music, and as the wife says, we've never heard any one sing like that."

Garston colored with sensitive pleasure, and said rather shyly:

"It's awfully good of you. I've a most important engagement to sing to-night in Manchester, and I

shan't have time to dine, you see, now that the train is delayed; but tea will be just the thing for my voice."

"You're a professional singer, then, sir?" said the young man respectfully.

"Yes," said Garston, but he did not volunteer his name, and the man did not ask it.

The woman had disappeared into the interior of the house, and a sound of hurried movement indicated that she was preparing a meal.

The young man brought out a little round table, and said cheerfully to Garston:

"Now, sir, choose your tree."

Garston solemnly walked down the garden path into the orchard, and looked about him for a moment.

"This one will do," he said, "and I'll take this garden seat if I may. I don't want to sit on an ordinary chair."

"All right, sir; but it's rather heavy," answered the young farmer.

"Oh, I'm up to that much," Garston said, still solemnly; "it's only big enough for two."

"Yes, sir," said the man, placing the table in position. "And now you only want a young lady to sit beside you and then it would be perfect."

"Ah!" said Garston, putting down the seat, "that's where you make a mistake. As long as I *wanted* a lady I should be happy, but when she came to sit beside me I should probably not want her any more."

"It's your mistake, sir," answered the man quickly, and flushing as he spoke; "to have the right woman by you is the best thing the world can give. I should

know, for my wife in there is as good as they're made, and I've been married the best part of a year now." The man's voice grew rather husky as he finished speaking.

"You're in luck, you see," said Garston; "I am always meeting women who don't care for anything besides themselves. I've never yet seen the woman whom I felt I could really love."

"Your time's to come, sir," said the man cheerfully; "here's Bessie with the tea now."

Garston sat back in his chair, watching Bessie Sanders as she laid the cloth deftly.

The crockery was of the old willow pattern, and the spoons were thin old silver.

"I've given you the best tea things, sir," Bessie said brightly, "and the old spoons; if I had gold ones you should have them, for you sing that lovely; I've never heard the like."

"Thank you," said Garston, smiling up at the woman, "I like to hear you say that. What a lovely tea you've given me, and now I've half an hour before I have to go back to that stupid train. I should have been in plenty of time if I had caught a later one, only I always like to rest before I sing."

"If you want anything more, you've only got to call," said Bessie, retreating as she spoke.

"I couldn't want anything besides this," said Garston, looking with real satisfaction on the plenteously spread table before him—two eggs, jam, tea, cream, and a lovely home-made cake.

Bessie Sanders retreated to her kitchen; her husband

was waiting at the door to speak to her before he went back to his work.

"He's a great man, is yon, Bessie," he said rather wistfully; "what wouldn't I give to hear him sing again."

"Ah, Jim," said Bessie, "it acts on you like—like magic—fair turns you round. I hate the sound of me own voice, and the way the words come out of me after I've heard him. His voice has been dipped in honey."

"Well, call me when he goes," said Sanders; "one kiss, Bessie girl! If he's got a voice that's been dipped in honey, I've a wife who *is* honey."

Bessie's blue-gray eyes gave her husband one quick loving glance, as she rested her head against his shoulder for a minute, and then nodded cheerfully as he went back into the garden.

CHAPTER II

Love in a shower of blossoms came
Down, and half-drowned me with the same.

—HERRICK.

GARSTON ate his tea slowly, for the moments were too perfect to waste in hurrying. He was seated at the little table with his back towards the farm; all before him and about him stood the cherry trees, and here and there glimpses of the deep May-blue sky could be seen amongst the branches.

The air, fresh and sunny, with just that touch of keenness that the young love but which makes the elderly and middle-aged draw their mufflers round them, blew about the fortunate man's head, and he leaned back in his chair and let the delight of life soothe all his senses.

Then, through one of the openings, he saw an avenue with a background of blue to it. Along the avenue a woman was coming.

She was walking very slowly and she held her hat in her hand; the sunlight dancing through the branches of the cherry trees fell in glittering cascades upon her copper-colored hair.

Garston examined her with the critical eye of a man

of the world who appraises women's looks, as he does other merchandise of life.

She was tall and thin, her traveling cloak was of a sombre shade of green, and as the fronts fell back, they revealed glimpses of a dress of dull blue underneath.

The hand that held the hat was gloveless, and the fingers were long and thin. Garston had first taken in all the details of her costume: they would tell him something of the woman. The face would tell him much less, for the face is always a mask.

She was now almost within speaking distance, and the sunlight fell on her face. She was pale and the lines of her face were clearly outlined. The forehead was broad and the hair was gathered away from it, showing the whole of the brow; the eyebrows were well marked, but as the eyelids were lowered the color of the eyes could not be seen. The lips were rather thin, and the mouth inclined to severity; altogether the lower part of the face was less pleasing than the upper.

She came on in such seeming unconsciousness that Garston suspected she knew he was there; but whether she knew or not, her carriage was absolutely perfect and pleased the man's æsthetic taste very thoroughly.

He leaned back, waiting for the moment when she must raise her eyes.

A slight increase in the wind sent the petals from the blossoms over her head and shoulders, and looking up she brushed them from her hair and saw the man sitting at the tea table.

He made a movement as if to rise, and she bent her head and said rather quickly:

"I beg your pardon if I am trespassing, but could you tell me where I could get some tea? The train by which I was traveling has broken down and there'll be at least another half-hour's delay."

"We are fellow-sufferers, then, as well as fellow-travelers, Madam," Garston said courteously, getting up as he spoke. "I have been given tea as a favor; but I beg another one, and that is that you will take my place. The tea is, I think, in excellent condition, and not more stewed than is to be expected."

He bowed again and moved slowly away.

"Stop, stop," she cried, "where are you going? If you will *share* your tea with me I shall be grateful, but if you desert your food I shall doubt its quality."

Garston bowed again, and striding across the grass fetched a very rickety-looking stool; coming back with it, he placed it by the table and then waving his hand towards the seat, said gravely:

"This is a fairy-land, the fairy land of Cherry Isle, I think. Therefore pour me out my tea. There is a teacup for you, and if we empty the sugar basin it will do for me."

The girl hesitated a moment, and then laughed, showing strong white teeth.

"It's very unconventional," she said, "but the east wind and the spring in the air are accountable and not I. Besides, I'm hungry, and we haven't long before that stupid train starts again."

She sat down in the seat Garston had just vacated

and in a few minutes she was eating as if really hungry. They talked of the cherry trees, and of the train, and then the girl leaned forward and said quietly:

"I do not think I am being quite fair; of course, I know *you*, Mr. Garston."

Charles Garston frowned uneasily and said in a quick, irritable voice:

"I want to forget that for a moment: I'm only the man in Cherry Isle who offers refreshment to weary travelers."

"I beg your pardon, mine host," said the girl, and as she spoke Garston caught sight of her eyes for the first time: the lashes were long and thick, and he had only been able to gather a general impression of darkness; and now a thrill passed through his whole frame.

For the girl had one dark blue eye and one dark brown.

The man was drinking his tea from the sugar basin, the girl hers from the cup, and as she saw his astonishment, which, despite all his breeding, leaped into every line of his face, her cup slipped from her hand and fell on to the grass. She said nothing, however, and Garston, glad of the interruption, stooped down and picked up the cup which, fortunately—since it was Bessie Sanders' best service—was unbroken. Then very slowly he put it on the table, and horribly conscious of his bad manners, and shocked at his own lapse of good breeding, and yet literally unable to think of anything to say in a natural manner, he pulled out his watch and said stiffly:

"I think we may allow ourselves another quarter of an hour, but longer will be unsafe."

No answer.

Charles Garston moved a little uneasily, but said industriously:

"I wonder what the other poor wretches did—I expect all the old ladies encamped along the line; what do you think?"

Still no answer.

Garston's gaze was rigidly fixed upon his companion's plate, and he was inwardly cursing himself.

Then, on to that plate, a big tear fell with a tiny little splash.

The man looked up.

She was sitting perfectly still. Over her naturally pale face a deadly whiteness had crept, the long thick lashes were once more sheltering the strange dissimilar eyes, but the lips were not trembling, although a second tear was slowly rolling after the first.

Then Charles Garston acted on impulse and, therefore, naturally.

He rose from his chair, was round the table in a second, and bending over her, took her cold hand in his and kissed it, saying eagerly, earnestly, and with perfect sincerity:

"Please don't! I'm the biggest cad going. Your eyes *are* unusual, but I think they are absolutely lovely, and they make you look like no other girl I've ever seen. I couldn't think why you attracted me so; I thought at first it was your copper-colored hair, but it

is not that altogether; and now you will never look at me again."

The girl gasped and then with a little tremor in her voice said:

"I can't help them; they *always* startle people, and you looked as if you had seen an apparition. I feel awfully nervy to-day."

"Why?" asked Garston quickly; "please tell me!"

"I'm a singer," she answered; "oh, not like you. I'm no one at all; but I have a small solo to-night at Manchester, only a line or so, and it is the very first time I've ever done anything in a big concert, and I'm fearfully worried. I shall succeed in the end," and her voice grew cold and hard, "but I should like to succeed in the beginning."

Charles Garston stood up.

"You will succeed, and soon. Your lips say so, as well by their shape as by the words they have uttered. But I think we should be walking back now; we must not lose that train, you know."

"No," she agreed.

She stood up and shook herself, with a queer lithe movement, like a shudder, and the few cherry blossoms that still clung to her copper-colored hair fell on to the table, one settling on Garston's white hand, long fingered, and religiously manicured.

He picked it up with his other hand, and rather absently placed it in his pocket, saying:

"I will pay the reckoning whilst you go on down the orchards."

The girl nodded, and with the same quick gliding

movement walked away, and the cherry trees soon hid her from sight.

"Half snake, half maiden, wholly strange and, I should say, a perfect actress," Garston thought to himself.

"Her entry was perfect, her exit perfection, but the eyes, by Jove, they did startle me. And yet I should like to see them again—dark blue and dark brown, and the blue one looked as if it could change into all shades of blue from England's summer sky to Geneva's lake."

The farmer and his wife were standing by their door, the well-built, sturdy young man, and his comely blue-gray-eyed wife. How deliciously in harmony it all was.

Harmony—it was the key-note to the singer's temperament and character.

Bessie Sanders spoke before Garston was within what he considered to be speaking distance:

"Now, sir, I know what you are going to say, but the song more than paid for what you've had, and we'd be proud if you'd come again if you are passing."

Her blue-gray eyes softened as she spoke, for one of the peculiar attractions of Garston's voice was that it lived in sound in the memories of those who heard it, and his notes seemed to be falling again on the clear cold air.

"I must thank you then," and Garston held out his smooth white hand. "I have had a delightful meal, and a unique revelation from Nature herself. I will come again if I may."

The workers' hands were clasped in turn by the successful singer, and raising his hat, he turned away and hurried down the avenue of trees.

The blossoms were as lovely as when he had passed an hour earlier; they contrasted as wonderfully as before in their sweet colored pink and white with the young green of the leaves; but Garston had a worrying vision of blue and brown before him. He really must see those eyes again. Who had ever heard of such a thing before? She need not have hurried so, and he did not even know her name.

He wondered if she could sing. Her speaking voice was attractive enough. Well, if she couldn't sing, she looked as if she could, at least, make listeners think she could.

What on earth had happened to her?

There was the line at last, and there *she* was standing by the stile; but, Good Lord! where was the train?

Startled out of all his ordinary calm, he strode rapidly up to the girl. She was breathing in quick gasps, her face was quite white, and she spoke in a high voice, vibrating with pain:

"It's gone—the train's gone! It was just starting as I came down the hill, and I waved and called; but it's gone, it's gone!"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Garston again.

"What's the good of taking it like that?" she asked indignantly; "think of something at once."

"I—I ——" he began rather feebly.

She turned away and flung her hands out:

"Oh, it doesn't matter to you! Missing a big en-

gagement will only enhance your reputation; but to me it's ruin, and it was my first, and now—and now ——"

Silence.

Garston wondered if she would cry. No, her white teeth were biting cruelly into the rather thin lower lip; but the strange eyes held no tears beneath the habitually lowered lids.

The man spoke gloomily:

"It's jolly awkward for you, but it's very bad for me. I've never missed an engagement before! Just think what a howling mess they will make of it without *me*."

The girl flashed round on him:

"You are utterly selfish—think of *me* for a moment."

Garston was rapidly losing his temper. What on earth did *her* trumpery part matter, when *his* was at stake? But women were all alike, they only thought of themselves.

He spoke very stiffly:

"I can only suggest that we follow the line until we come to the nearest station, and then perhaps we may be able to find a car to take us on. It will be expensive and tiring, and we shall have to exceed the speed limit; but perhaps we can get to a station where the next express stops. We should still be in time."

Inwardly he began to curse.

"Then come at once," ordered the girl imperiously, and in a moment she was over the stile, down the side of the bank and hurrying down the four-foot way.

He followed more leisurely. What a fool ending it was to a perfect little episode! By Jove, she needn't tear along like that, and since he did not know her name it was awkward.

"Hi, Miss!"; "Stop, Madam!": either form of address would sound boorish.

He hurried, covering the ground more rapidly now than she did.

"I think you might tell me your name," he began in rather aggrieved tones, as he came abreast of her.

She turned her head towards him, a glint of color showing under the lowered lids.

"Certainly," she answered, "but I never thought of doing it before. My name is Anthea Argent."

"How strange!" he said, bowing. "We seem to have fallen into the land of Herrick's poetry this afternoon."

"Do you think we shall catch a train?" she demanded. "And please do not walk there. Do go either before or behind me; I feel convinced that a train will come up and kill you."

"The traffic would be in a state of considerable disorganization if such an event were to happen," he said, smiling at her, "for I am walking on the up-line, and all trains on that line come towards us."

"One never knows," she answered nervously; "please do come away from the line. I should never find my way now by myself."

Garston gave her an indignant glance, thinking to himself: "What a callous-minded brute! If I got

chopped to pieces, *she* would never find her way, and that's all she cares."

However, he complied with her wishes, and stalked in high dudgeon before her.

And in single file they made their way to the station.

CHAPTER III

Music, thou queen of Heaven, care charming spell,
That strik'st a stillness into hell;
Thou that tam'st tigers, and fierce storms that rise,
With thy soul-melting lullabies;
Fall down, down, down, from those thy shining spheres
To charm our souls, as those enchant our ears.

—HERRICK.

THE conductor-manager was tearing his hair, which hung in tight ringlets round a big bald patch of cranium, and as he pulled and tore, the patch grew alternately red and white, to the fascination of the call-boy who stood by the door waiting instructions.

"Garston will be here in ten minutes, but the show is going to rack and ruin," he groaned. "I've had to change the items like an amateur at a chess board. Miss Argent, too! That solo bit has had to be done by Madam Berenice. 'Car broken down,' he says, and then that fool telephone must needs bust up as well."

He stamped violently, and as he did so Charles Garston came into the room in his usual leisurely manner, and Anthea Argent followed him a second or two afterwards.

"Awfully sorry to put you about like this," said

Garston rather loftily. Anthea noticed that his manner was an altogether new one, and she also observed that all the arrogance slid away from the conductor-manager's face at once.

"No matter, no matter, Mr. Garston," said the other; "you are just in time, and no one knows of your non-appearance. Cars are tiresome things. Ah! good-evening, Miss Argent. I'm sorry to say we had to put forward the scene from *La Bohême* in which you were to appear, and so we shan't want you to-night."

"What?" Anthea's voice went thin suddenly. "You mean that I've lost my chance?"

"Oh, you'll have another," the conductor said, carelessly. "Now, Mr. Garston, the second part will be due in ten minutes, and your item is first."

But Charles Garston was watching Anthea.

She was standing perfectly still, so still that he could hardly see her breathe.

And then she turned suddenly and looked at him.

Her strange eyes were blazing, and the passion in them blent them to a tawny color.

Charles Garston faced the manager.

"You transposed the items, I see," he said grimly.

"Yes, Mr. Garston."

"Please oblige me by giving Miss Argent this solo." And he pointed with one slim finger to one of the most important songs of the evening.

"Out of the question, Mr. Garston," was the prompt reply; "Miss Argent is quite unprepared for work of this sort."

"Are you?" Garston looked at the girl.

"If you give me that song, I will sing it as you have never heard it sung before." Anthea's voice was still thin, but her eyes seemed to change color as she faced the great singer.

"Then please arrange it so," said Garston, making a movement toward his pocket, which the manager perfectly well understood.

"But Madame Lavago," he stammered, "what will she say?"

"I will speak to her. Yes, all right; I'm ready," and Charles Garston nodded to the call-boy and disappeared through the door.

"I congratulate you, Miss Argent," said the manager. "Mr. Garston must think very highly of your —(a significant pause)—talent, to be ready to vouch for you in this manner."

Anthea turned her face towards the man, but the strange eyes were hidden beneath their lids and long lashes once again.

"I shall justify his opinion, I assure you," she said coldly; "and moreover I will sing another song as an encore."

"Perhaps you will like to come to the side of the platform and hear Mr. Garston," suggested the manager politely.

"Thank you!"

With a stiff bow she preceded the man from the room.

He followed her, grinning rather unpleasantly and thinking:

"I've never known Garston so ready to put himself about before. She walks well, and I hope she'll sing well. The Lavago has a cold, I know, so perhaps Garston will be able to arrange matters. She certainly plays her cards well. She's hooked Charlie, that's plain."

When they had reached the floor at the side of the platform, Garston's voice broke upon the silence.

Not a sound, not a movement, came from the vast audience.

Anthea forgot herself and her ambitions, and heard only the glorious voice, as it rose and fell in strong sweet melody.

The manager listened with a professional ear, and watched her at the same time.

She had forgotten everything but Garston's voice, and her strange eyes were wide open, gazing into a heaven of sound.

"That's it," the manager thought, giving a tug at his curls, and causing the bald patch to change color; "that's it! Why, she won't need a voice with those eyes! What the dickens made her hide them when I saw her before, I can't conceive. But it's the Halls she should be on. There would be an opening for her there, and no mistake."

Clear and full Garston's mellow voice rose and fell.

He looked as if he were completely unconscious of the effect he was producing; in reality the practical side of him was often uppermost when he was singing most divinely.

And to-night, as he carried his audience up into the

seventh heaven, he was wondering what had made him act in such a wild manner.

Supposing she made a fool of herself—supposing her voice went thin in singing, as it had done in speaking — supposing she broke down! . . . There would just be time to settle the matter with Madame Lavago; if she refused to give up her solo to Miss Argent he would wash his hands of the whole affair. He had been a fool to meddle in the matter.

His voice, gathering in beauty, rose to the climax of the song, and then ceased.

A quick tense silence, and then thunderous applause.

The singer very rarely responded to the demand for encores, and he had bowed and disappeared long before the first burst of clapping had died away.

Would Madame Lavago see him?

Possibly, but Madame was distraught. She had sneezed, and was now weeping. Perhaps Monsieur would be able to soothe her, for in truth Madame was beside herself. And the French maid announced "Mr. Garston" in joy-bell tones.

Madame Lavago was stout, but comely. She sat on a sofa, holding a dainty handkerchief to her eyes, and her plump shoulders and fat white arms shook like jelly with emotion.

She had been discovered in South America, and she had pleased the public now for several seasons. Her voice was a perfectly trained instrument that obeyed every command. She could run up and down the gamut as a mouse can run up and down a stick ladder, and every one was very proud of her; needless to say,

she was very proud of herself. And what more *could* be desired either by every one or by herself?

"Oh, Mr. Garston," she quavered musically, "I have a cold and I have to sing in ten minutes; what, oh what shall I do?"

"I heard of your misfortune," said Charles, saluting the fat hand, "and I have come to tell you that I will either sing in your place or find a substitute, and to serve you ——" he paused expressively.

Madame Lavago clasped her hands together in an ecstasy of thankfulness, but words were denied to her for a sneeze more in keeping with her physical proportions than with the customs of polite society shook her with painful force.

She waved her hand in despairing farewell, and Garston withdrew.

The gods were with him so far.

The manager met him as he came out of the door.

"Madame Lavago has a cold and prefers not to sing. I have promised to find a substitute," he said abruptly.

"Miss Argent is ready," nodded the manager; "I will go and make the announcement."

Anthea stood waiting.

Perfunctory applause of a few seconds' duration sounded from the audience.

And then she was facing them.

The first moment to the one who stands alone before thousands is indescribable. Millions of eyes seem to project themselves on long feelers from the heads of trillions of men and women.

The audience may be shuffling, but the one only hears the silence. The opening bars of music seem to sound for many minutes, and then the last note comes with a fearful rush.

Charles Garston, sitting well back in the manager's box, held his breath. He saw a slight quiver pass over the girl's face. Was she going to break down? . . . And then she began to sing automatically. The quality that had pleased Garston in her speaking voice had gone. It was correct, but thin.

The song was only two verses in length. A few claps here and there and a shuffling of disapproval. Anthea bowed slightly, and then gave a despairing look over the audience. Her eyes suddenly met Garston's. The man was an artist, and that glance told him much of Anthea Argent's soul.

Looking straight into those extraordinary eyes of hers, he clapped his hands noiselessly. Anthea moved back, then spoke in an undertone to the accompanist.

He hesitated, but the spell of her personality compelled him, and he began to play the song the name of which she had mentioned to the manager.

She stood again before the vast audience, and over them passed an invisible wave. As the wind moves over the corn fields, and the waving grasses bow to their unseen Master, so some occult force emanating from the thin figure standing perfectly still compelled their attention.

The first expression on the faces before her had been one of contemptuous astonishment. Now it changed to expectancy, and every unit of that vast

concourse waited for the first note of the voice they had rejected five minutes before.

It broke upon the silence—full, and deep and low, and sweet beyond all telling. All the color left Charles Garston's lips and face as he listened.

Down into a sea of melody he was drawn—a sea where waves were made of perfect harmonies whose echoes sounded in sobbing ripples of great memories and highest aspirations, whose depths seemed unfathomable, and whose touch to his soul was cool and lingering. Well has that most wonderful race of all races—the Hebrew—taught us, in its glorious poetry and its prophetic visions, that in Heaven there is continual music and multitudes of voices everlastingly chanting, harmony rising from harmony, mellowing into exultation and passing into whisperings to rise again in wild outbursts of sound.

And as Anthea sang Charles Garston knew Heaven. . . .

And then it was over; the echo of the voice had died away. Anthea had bowed and gone; and wild applause and tumultuous calls fell unheeded upon Garston's ears. He had heard a voice which completely satisfied his soul.

He was roused from his reverie by the somewhat excited entrance of the conductor-manager.

"Good Lord! Mr. Garston," he began, pulling at his curls so vigorously that the bald patch became a chalky white, "you've found a diamond mine. I never heard anything like it before. She has gone straight into my room, has locked the door, and I think has had a fit.

We heard an awful bang, then a sort of groan, and now I can't get an answer. Shall I send for a doctor, or ask Madame Lavago to look after her?"

Charles Garston gazed at the man and smiled.

"I will go and speak to her," he said. "*We* don't go and have fits, my dear fellow, just because our singing is appreciated."

CHAPTER IV

What can I do in poetry
Now the good spirit's gone from me?
Why nothing now but lonely sit
And over read what I have writ.

—HERRICK.

CHARLES GARSTON went quickly to the manager's room, knocked at the door, turned the handle, and, nothing hindering him, went in.

Anthea was sitting by the table reading a newspaper.

She made a slight movement, but otherwise did not disturb herself beyond saying:

"Is that you, Mr. Garston?"

"Yes," and then Charles came and stood by the mantelpiece, looked down at the quiet still figure, and laughed lightly: "Poor old Phipps thought you were ill."

Anthea moved her head with a slight disdainful gesture:

"He is extraordinarily fussy. I came in here feeling absolutely done up, and stumbled over a footstool. In a rage I kicked it along the floor, and he must needs hammer on the door, and ask me if I was ill. I nearly swore at him. Thank heaven, I had just strength enough left to lock the door."

"I suppose you did groan though." Charles Gar-

ston's voice was still lightly amused, though his face was pale.

"Groan—of course I did," she said angrily, but the eyes were well covered once again, and she added abruptly:

"Well, have I satisfied you, O great singer?"

"Much more than satisfied," he answered with enthusiasm. "I have never heard a voice in the course of my whole life that I preferred to my own until tonight. Thank goodness that you are a woman, otherwise my position as first voice in Europe would be jeopardized. You have 'arrived,' and your success is more than assured."

He held out his hand, and Anthea put hers within it; he felt it cold and, as he pressed it, it seemed to tremble.

And then she looked up at him, with her strange eyes; they were not full of tears, as he had thought they might be, but they were burning gloomily with a smouldering indignation, a hopeless defiance.

"Yes," she said savagely, and once again her voice was thin. "Yes, but that voice comes and goes, and sometimes for weeks together I never hear it. Nature has dealt harshly with me, and I am in revolt."

The man singer, absolutely assured of his own powers, was moved with genuine sympathy, and he showed it when he answered:

"Have you consulted surgeons, have you trained, and dieted—there must be some *reason* for such changes."

"I've been to every one, and done everything," she

answered desperately. "I've spent all my spare money, and all I couldn't spare. My mother's voice was the same, only worse; sometimes it absolutely went, and I believe my grandmother's was just the same. One big surgeon said it was hereditary, some weakness of the vocal chords, but that it would probably wear itself out in several generations."

"Operation?" suggested Charles Garston.

"No."

Anthea turned away, and went to the window.

"There's nothing to be done," said she, "and I will conquer yet; that voice which is my real voice *shall* come when I command."

She seemed to have forgotten for the moment that she was speaking to Garston; her thin figure was held tensely, and the lips closed on one another with unbending severity.

"I wonder," thought the man to himself, "if she is acting, or acting naturally; anyway she is the queerest woman I've ever come across—and that voice—ye gods!" Out loud he said:

"I expect it is a case of nerves; when you are more used to success you will have your voice at your command."

"Do you think so?" and Anthea turned round eagerly, looking straight up at him; "if I really thought that I shouldn't mind so much."

Garston's keen blue eyes met hers, and he felt that he had taken the second step in his knowledge of her, and he spoke out his discovery, watching her keenly as he did so.

"You are almost bound to succeed, for you are a perfect actress; you seem to know the full value of every gesture. There is only one thing you do not seem to realize."

"What is that?" and again the strange eyes sought his.

"You only look at me when you forget yourself," he said slowly. "But you do not know that your eyes are your most powerful weapon. When you are acting you lower your lids. You must learn to control that. Forgive me, but I am an actor, and have lived on the stage, you know."

Anthea drew a deep breath, blinked, and then, with an effort, looked at him again, and broke into a sweet low laugh:

"You are the first person who has ever found *that* out, but I have been *so* jeered at for these same eyes of mine that I almost hate them, and as for acting, I seem to be always acting."

"Where did you get them?"

Garston came and stood by her.

A discreet knock at this instant sounded at the door, and the conductor-manager entered.

"A million congratulations, Miss Argent," he began, advancing with hands outstretched. "Two or three interviewers and newspaper men are waiting outside. Yours has been the greatest success I have ever known."

Anthea bowed gravely, her eyes veiled again, and just touched one of the manager's podgy hands with her thin cold one, but before she could speak, the man-

ager was swept aside, and Madame Lavago flung her arms round Anthea, who was completely hidden in that capacious bosom.

"My sister, welcome to the throne of success!" cried the Lavago dramatically; "I hear from all sides that you are divine, and I and my cold have paved the way, the golden way."

Anthea submitted herself to the embrace.

Madame Lavago looked at her, caught sight of her eyes, and, murmuring: "I must go and rest," swept from the room as suddenly as she had appeared.

The manager had gone, and Garston and Anthea were once more alone.

Anthea suddenly put her head down on the mantelpiece and burst into tears.

"Don't, don't, *please* don't, Miss Argent," the man exclaimed.

But Anthea sobbed on, for a moment, and then looked up.

"I am utterly worn out. I must go to bed, or I shall be ill."

"Where are you staying?" Garston asked, anxiously.

"I don't know—somewhere cheap."

"Cheap?" echoed Garston, in sheer astonishment, for somehow Anthea had not suggested poverty.

"Yes, cheap," she repeated, and then she took out her purse and emptied it on the table.

"There—I've five shillings to pay for bed and breakfast. Until I'm paid for this song, I am at the

end of my tether, and if I had not succeeded this time I should have killed myself."

She was not acting now, the strange eyes were flaming, and the whole face quivering.

Charles Garston himself turned white; he took out his purse, and held it out to Anthea, saying sternly:

"There's about twenty-five pounds in it, and you are to take it at once. I'll have no more fooling; you are done up, poor child. I will drive with you to the hotel, and will engage rooms for you now on the telephone. Sit down and rest."

Forcing the purse into her hand, he left the room. Anthea put the purse on the table, and looked down at it, many expressions chasing each other over her mobile face.

Then she drew herself up and spoke out loud, looking straight before her with wide open eyes.

"I have won," she said, and the voice was rich and full; "I have won in two ways, as an artist and as a woman."

CHAPTER V

There be in love as many fears
As the summer corn has ears.

—HERRICK.

CHARLES GARSTON had passed a restless night; moreover when he *had* slept he had dreamed, and as a consequence he was now sitting over a very late breakfast in a very bad temper, a rare occurrence with the successful world-loved and world-loving singer.

Was he going to make a fool of himself?—had he already done so? What business had a woman to possess eyes like that and a voice that was just ordinary at one moment and divine the next? How wonderful her hair was! How regal her carriage! What a consummate actress! But it was a bit too much if he were going to have bad nights and bad dreams and spoil his perfect health just because a thin woman had looked at him with odd eyes. Curse that train and that fool of a conductor-manager. Phipps would chatter like a magpie, and the Lavago would sigh and wave her arms and look unspeakable things. Good Lord, she might even hint that he was serious: and that in *his* case would be more disastrous than if he were sinful.

The coffee was vile. He wondered what sort of a notice the chief paper had given her.

At this point he pulled the pile of morning papers to him, and opened the first that came to hand.

"New Nightingale," he read, "Feminist Find. Miracle of Music. Dramatic Development." Then followed a description of Anthea's performance, and an interview with her afterwards, where she was described as having dark hair and blue eyes, and a bonnie and winsome face, and not looking more than eighteen.

The second paper followed on in the same style, the interview which she had apparently given this man being of a most prolonged description, and including various stage stories.

And so it went on through all the chief papers. Anthea had become the sensation of the hour. One great and powerful newspaper lord had happened to be present at the performance, and, being an excellent man of business even in his pleasure, had seen the possibility of a paying sensation, and had telephoned to one of his henchmen:

"Run her." Hence the alliteration.

Of course, Garston knew the real worth of the columns of praise, but he also knew the golden worth of it to Anthea, and for a moment jealousy sprang into fierce being, for his name had the correct number of lines devoted to it and—no more.

He sat frowning heavily, and then suddenly the ill-temper passed from his face, and he smiled.

"It will do me good," he murmured inaudibly, "for *I* introduced her, and man and woman cannot rival each other." The memory of the music stole back

upon his mind, and his eyes became dreamy as he thought; then to the memory of sound came back the memory of sight, and he beheld Anthea's haunting eyes, now fierce, now full of pain, eyes as of two souls looking out at him from one body, and the artist in him—and the man—dwelt with pleasure on the vision.

A little later, and he was shown into Anthea's presence.

She was sitting in an armchair surrounded by a sea of papers; her dress was the same dull blue, and Garston with his quick eye for details noticed that she had altered it by some addition into a morning gown, instead of the semi-evening one it had been the night before, and something pathetic in this sign of poverty touched the successful young singer with a feeling dangerously akin to pity.

Anthea rose to greet him, and a cascade of cut out columns fell from her lap as she did so. She held out her thin long-fingered hand, and smiled at him, a glint of color showing beneath her lowered lids. He bowed over it, with a slightly stagey air, and waving his hand towards the papers said:

"You must have sat up late last night, to give all those interviews."

Anthea sat down again, and answered quietly as she began to pick up her cuttings:

"I never saw any one at all. I was kept at the telephone for half an hour or so, and I answered various questions, but long ago I made up my mind never to give interviews."

"Why ever not?" asked Garston, helping her to

pick up the fallen paragraphs; "you will find it part of your trade, and although the chief consideration with a singer should be the singing, yet the second must be the audience."

Anthea moved her head, and a faint color crept up into her pale face.

"No," she said stiffly. "I will interview over the telephone, and send my photograph to the papers, but I will *not* grant interviews."

"You make a mistake," he said softly, "a great mistake; but I came to congratulate you, and to ask how you were after your triumph."

"I have received several letters delivered by hand," she said gravely; "also a couple of telegrams. They are business offers. Will you tell me which I ought to accept?"

He took them from her, sat down by the table, and began to read.

"This Johnny seems to be forcing the pace," he said lightly.

Anthea leaned forward, and took the letter from his hand, glanced at it, tore it across evenly, and threw it into the fire, saying very quietly:

"I did not mean to give you that. I must have put it back into the wrong envelope."

Garston examined the contents of another envelope.

"Ah, this is business, I see." When he had read the several letters with business-like precision, he proceeded to advise her.

Anthea saw that to follow his advice would be to walk in the right way to permanent success, and she

answered her letters according to his directions, proving herself to be as apt a business woman as he was business man. And for about half an hour they worked together, he as master, she as pupil, and as smoothly as if they had been employer and employee.

"There," he said as she signed her name to her last letter, "I hope we've answered them all very wisely. It should be fairly smooth sailing for you now."

"Thank you very, very much," Anthea answered warmly, "you've helped me splendidly."

"Shall we go out now and take a stroll, that is if we can do so without becoming niggers?" And Garston flicked a black speck off his immaculate cuff as he spoke.

Anthea stood up, the color coming into her face, and her eyes wide open.

"I forgot," she said bitterly, "I quite forgot. Just supposing my own voice never comes back."

"It's nerves," he answered; "nothing but nerves. Come out and forget all that nonsense; we'll have lunch together, and then I must get back to London. Weren't those cherry orchards lovely?"

"I shall never forget them," and Anthea's voice became richer as she spoke. "Above all else, I shall always remember your voice coming to me through the cherry blossoms; it will echo always in my mind, for it is to you that I owe my success."

Her voice trembled a little.

"Please don't, Miss Argent," said Charles, hastily.

"Weren't those people a charming couple—there was something so absolutely sincere about them?"

"I saw scarcely anything of them," answered Anthea.

"No, I forgot; but I was thinking that their children would be happy mortals. Just consider what it would be to be brought up in that place, to see the cherry blossoms bloom and turn to fruit year after year, to feel that keen fresh air. Ah, it was a land of dreams and visions."

Garston was speaking half to himself, and Anthea was watching him, with a strange expression in her eyes. It seemed to say that he was young—so very young, whilst she ——

Both of them found the walk and the lunch extraordinarily pleasant. All the angles were smoothed away, and although the two did not get to understand each other better, the acquaintanceship advanced, and when Garston bade her good-bye, he quite forgot to think what his world might say of him.

"I must see you in London," he said earnestly, "for I must hear you sing again. I am there for a few weeks, and then in June I go to Paris for a few days."

"I will send you my address," she answered, and then she added: "Mr. Garston, you have saved me from despair, and now that the road lies open before me I know that it is your hand that has shown me the way, and I ought to tell you that *the way* is all I care for."

One quick flash of her eyes, and then she left him.

"That's the real woman," said Garston to himself

soberly, "a woman of ambition, and no flesh and blood. I wonder ——" But what he wondered he did not formulate.

Back past the cherry orchards, and on to London, and his life of alternate moments of hard work and ease.

A week came and went, a week of sunny weather and sparkling rains, and no news of Anthea.

"She might have written, after what I did for her." This was his first thought.

"Bother the girl, why doesn't she write?" This was his second thought.

"*When* is she going to write?" was his third thought.

And all through that week those strange eyes haunted him, and his usual indolent good temper seemed to have deserted him—but he sang better than he had ever done before.

His London engagements were over, and he was going to Paris the next day. As he had an invaluable valet, he rarely had to trouble about mundane things, and having dined early he went out for a walk.

Garston disliked the Parks, and in those days the Embankment was unspoilt by trams. He made his way down to the river.

The long fresh May evening was waning, and the man was in a thoughtful mood, as he moved slowly down the path.

The river was attractive in this sunset, all the ugliness was toned into picturesqueness, and the voices of the town seemed subdued into harmony.

Moved by an impulse, the famous singer hailed a boatman, and told him to take him with the tide for an hour or so.

The boatman, a thin, under-sized, wizened-looking man, rowed him out, and then with strong leisurely strokes began to pull towards the West. And dreamily Garston watched the banks and the low-lying wharves, until a certain chill in the air roused him.

"Here," he said; "I think I'll get ashore here, and walk back. The evening's very cold."

The lovely day was ending as lovely days do so frequently end in England in a cold chill wind and mist.

The lamps were already lit, the windows of the little houses which he passed were all hermetically sealed, and his feet echoed rather loudly in the quiet streets which he was now traversing.

The slums were left behind, and he had reached quiet respectable workmen's dwellings, and the land of small clerkdom and dead dullness. Street after street of sameness. He was walking down one side of a little square, and as he passed a house the figure of a woman was suddenly silhouetted against the light within the room. She had apparently been standing by the open window, and some one had lit the gas in the room.

Some sudden thought caused Garston to pull up in his rapid stride, some memory of a head held in that fashion, and from the gloom of the street outside he stood watching.

He could see well into the room, which was raised

a little above the level of the street, and he watched the woman cross the room and sit down at the piano. She began to sing very softly to herself.

And Garston outside forgot his wet boots and possible chills, and leaned against the railing and listened.

For it was Anthea Argent who sang, and the voice was the voice that had charmed him into heaven.

Very low and very sweet the tones floated out into the damp chill air, and Garston stood waiting until the song should be finished. There came a break in the melody, and Garston took the three steps in one stride, and knocked at the door—and waited.

He continued to wait, and nothing happened. He knocked again imperatively.

There was an impatient opening of a door, a sort of exclamation of annoyance perfectly audible through the ill-fitting woodwork, and then the door was opened by Anthea herself, wearing a very forbidding expression.

The dim gas light wavering over her head showed a pale face; she wore a thick shawl held closely round her shoulders.

Charles Garston stood well back in the shadow, and for a moment did not answer; then he said, and his voice was quick and eager, much quicker and more eager than he had intended:

"Why did you not send me your address, Miss Argent?"

"Mr. Garston?" Nothing but cold annoyance in her tone.

"Please ask me in," Garston was once again the man of the world; "I want to speak to you."

Before she had time to answer a hoarse voice spoke from behind the door at the end of the passage:

"Oo's that, miss? Is it me that's wanted or you?"

Anthea shrugged her shoulders, and then stood aside, saying in clear tones, apparently for the benefit of the speaker down the passage:

"Please come in, Mr. Garston, if you really want to." She stood aside for him to enter.

Garston was fully aware that she did not want him, but as he passed her he made up his mind to know the reason.

Anthea shut the door and indicated by a movement of her hand the room in which she had been sitting, and Charles Garston went in.

For a moment the light, badly burning though it was, confused his sight, and he made his way to the fireplace instinctively; Anthea followed, shut the door, and then stood in the middle of the room waiting for him to speak.

Garston glanced at the fireplace. It was cold and empty, and he looked deliberately round the room, taking in all the details with his quick glance.

The floor was bare of covering; only a green ragged rug lay before the fireplace, one of those rugs presented with many pounds of margarine; a chair which since the back was broken was an excellent substitute for a music stool; a plain wood table, and in the corner a

heap of something covered with a shawl, something which from its appearance was probably bedding; and this was literally all, except the piano.

Charles Garston turned his gaze on Anthea, who stood before him somewhat in the attitude of a criminal expecting sentence, and he neither moved nor spoke.

Then Anthea made a gesture, and said with a sort of cheerful bitterness:

"You see why I did not send you my address. I shall be more comfortably circumstanced next week, and then I shall write and send you back the money you so kindly lent me."

"No," he replied. "I do *not* see why you did not send me your address."

"Don't you?" and now Anthea spoke passionately, and looked at him with clear eyes of rebellion. "This is my home; look at it, my own furniture. See the street I live in. I pawned the fender to buy my ticket for Manchester, and sold the bedstead to buy food, so that I should be able to sing next week."

"How long has this been going on?"

"How long?" Anthea flung her hands out, and spoke rapidly. "How long? All my life; listen, Mr. Garston. My mother was the child of a wandering singer, whose husband, or keeper, beat her when her voice went, and it was always going, my mother said, and she grew up to the same life. Beatings, cursings, and pathways down through hell." Anthea paused, but Garston stood so still, and his expression was one of such grave interest that Anthea spoke more bitterly

and quickly. She was not acting now; the wrongs of her mother and of herself drove her into complete naturalness.

"And then one day she was singing at a fair, and a gentleman heard her, and was delighted with her voice, and offered to make her fortune ——" Again Anthea paused, and then went on with cold quick sentences— "to make her fortune—on the usual terms. Think of it, Mr. Garston, sixteen and motherless, with a voice so lovely and yet so uncertain; and a man offered her all she wanted. She told me that for a year or so she was happy; that her voice never went wrong, that the man she loved took her all over Europe, and that she sang privately, and semi-publicly in many places — and then her voice went utterly, and the man turned her out.

"Then later I was born, and for years my mother struggled on, abroad, keeping me and herself by singing at cafés, fairs, music halls. And I—oh, my childish voice was very sweet, and I soon began to help her. Not until I was about fifteen did my voice begin to go queer, and an old man who had once been a famous teacher took me in hand, and taught me for years. He was the only good man I have ever met. And then my mother died, and I came to England three years ago. Old Raffero took me to voice specialists. I had good lessons, and oh! how hard I worked. When he had spent his last penny on me, the old man died. Since then I have kept myself. I had no money, and who can enter either the world of music or literature or stage without the glitter of gold to show

the way! I have sung anywhere and everywhere. Public-houses, fairs, odd turns at music halls—and then my chance came."

Anthea stopped, and walked to the window, then back to the piano and struck a few notes, with her back turned towards Garston.

"I am twenty-one, and I mean to succeed. I care for nothing else, nor believe in anything else."

"Was your mother like you?" asked Garston quietly.

"Yes, very like me; she had lovely brown eyes, but otherwise we were marvelously alike."

Garston's question sprang into his face, and Anthea again flung her hands out, and her voice grew thin and sharp.

"Yes, the man who was my father had wonderful blue eyes, eyes that you never forgot, my mother told me once, and I carry that accursed inheritance with me. Besides my ambition, there *is* one other thing I care for."

"What is that?"

Then Anthea gave herself a shake, and laughed coldly:

"I don't know why I have confided in you, Mr. Garston. I very rarely forget myself, although I have just done so."

Garston strode forward, and took the thin long hands in his; they felt icy cold, and for one instant the two singers were only young man and woman, forgetful of everything else. Suddenly Anthea's strange eyes veiled themselves. Garston dropped her

hands, flushing scarlet, and stepped back, saying quickly:

"We are fellow artists and also fellow beings."

Then an embarrassing silence fell upon them; the barrier that divides man from woman, and soul from soul had been lifted for a second, and the impulse in both of them was to turn away.

"I have been very unconventional, Mr. Garston, and so have you, but it is really late, and you must say 'Good-night' now."

Garston hesitated a moment, and then said grimly:

"I will go at once if you promise me something."

Anthea waited for him to speak, standing still and stiff in a most uncompromising attitude.

"Leave this place to-morrow and go to the best hotel," the man went on vehemently; "here you are—starving yourself with cold and ruining your voice, and in a month or so you will be earning as much money as you want: until then let *me* be your banker. Oh! I am an excellent man of business, I assure you, and you shall repay me with interest. Why, child,"—it was the singer who was now speaking—"to have discovered you will add to my reputation. I've never done such a thing before, and since I'm going to America in the autumn, if you will only condescend to become famous first, why I shall have nothing to regret in the events of this year. America will pour its dollars before me, and not only fight for the privilege of touching my hand as it did before, but will probably want to sell the air I breathe. Come, be reasonable, Miss Argent."

Anthea stood before him cold and impassive; the copper-colored hair showing reddish in the dull gas light, the broad brow and the thin lower part of the face strangely out of harmony with each other.

Then she lifted her eyelids, and the brown and the blue eyes looked straight at him, and for the first time he saw youth in them, youth and laughter, and a laugh suddenly broke from her.

"Mr. Garston, you are funny; it's a perfect revelation to know that your fame has not turned you into an old man. Yes, I will keep the twenty-five pounds for the present, but I will stay here and have a fire, and I will never forget your kindness. And now good-night."

She held out her hand.

Garston took it, and for an instant seemed about to bend over it, in his own correct dramatic style. Then he altered his mind, held it in his for a moment, clasping it with a strong firm pressure, and looking down intently into the strange eyes as he did so. "Good-night," he said soberly; "I thank you for the confidence you have shown me. Let it be a link between us in the future. Good-night."

Anthea Argent listened to the footsteps as they sounded on the pavement outside.

Fainter and yet fainter, and then no more audible. But the woman stood as if listening long after the sounds had died away, listening with a troubled face. The eyes that the singer found so oddly compelling were wide open and bright with the suspicion of tears.

And through the mist of her unshed tears she looked

back into the years that lay behind her, wherein she had never been young, and then on into the years that lay hidden in the future, the years that were to bring a golden harvest of fame and money.

CHAPTER VI

Come, Anthea, let us two
Go to feast, as others do.
—HERRICK.

"AND so you are off to America in a week or so?" asked the Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot lazily, as he watched Charles Garston carefully light a cigar.

"Yes." Garston was apparently absorbed in his cigar.

"Want to go?" asked the parson, stretching his long legs luxuriously.

"Not particularly, but it's an engagement of long standing. Ah, this *is* something like a cigar!"

The two men were sitting side by side on two stones on a certain moor in the north of England.

Neither shot, and yet they had been invited there for the shooting.

Their host, Sir Lewis Mayder, and his daughter were with their other guests.

Cecil Arbuthnot and Charles Garston were public school men, and although Garston was considerably ahead in the race for name and fame, Arbuthnot was not badly placed.

He had many things in his favor—brains and birth, good looks and broad convictions. He came of a long

line of men who had been bishops and deans, and occasionally archdeacons; gaiters, in fact, seemed an integral part of the costume of an Arbuthnot; and his blood if it had been analyzed would have most certainly yielded the episcopal germ; his manner, too, was benedictory, his hands were well made, and his business capabilities excellent.

All the Arbuthnots were clever men, and the Rev. Cecil, being a Conservative, was safe for the next Liberal Bishopric. He was now resting after genuine hard work in a poor parish.

He was a keen student of humanity, and he noticed a change in the singer, his friendship for whom had been formed in their school days, a real, if not very deep, affection existing between the two men.

Arbuthnot did not smoke, drank only water, and never used slang of any description, but all his friends liked him, and put down his general cleanliness of life and mind to his cloth, and not to anything really wrong in his point of view of life; and Garston, also a fastidious man, found him on this present occasion a very welcome companion.

For something *was* wrong with Garston.

And that something was that he was haunted by a pair of eyes, one of which was blue and the other brown: a singularly cold, and yet attractive personality, a voice that could delight even his perfect knowledge of music, and yet a voice that could lose its charm: and all this combined in one woman, whose birth was a tragedy and whose ambition was to be successful.

Anthea Argent would have been more than satisfied had she known the effect she had produced on the famous singer.

Arbuthnot watched his friend as he smoked. What a good-looking fellow he was, and certainly that dissatisfied frown suited him better than the general expression of smoothness and calm which he had hitherto worn. What had made the difference?—a woman, of course! But what woman would refuse the singer anything? thought Arbuthnot cynically. Out loud he said:

"I am due back in my parish on Saturday. I rather envy you your travels, you know, Garston."

"You need not," answered Garston gloomily, "it's the deuce and all being a public favorite."

"You used not to say so," remarked Arbuthnot, his eyes leaving Garston's frowning face, and gazing with satisfaction at the sweeping view of crag and heather that lay around them.

"When one is quite young, it's all right," continued Garston, flinging away his half-finished cigar, "but a man wants something besides sweetmeats."

"That's a profound truth you've hit upon and a very old one," agreed the parson. "I always said you succeeded too young, you know. Why, here am I at thirty odd only a South London vicar, and you are at the top of the tree at twenty-six."

"Luck!" ejaculated Garston. "It's about time we were making for the house, though, isn't it?"

Arbuthnot rose lazily and stretched himself.

"Yes," he agreed, "and our hostess likes punctu-

ality. She does it all awfully well for such a young girl; she can't be more than nineteen, you know."

"Jolly good-looking, but not the sort I care for," said Garston.

"What sort *do* you care for?" asked the parson, leaping lightly over a furze bush.

"The sort that doesn't care for me," answered Garston, quickly. "Why, there's Sir Lewis and Miss Mayder—funny dried up little chap, the father, isn't he?"

"Yes, but he's very clever; just look how he manages everything: great financial ability, and splendid powers of organization."

The two men raised their caps as Miss Mayder hailed them.

"I've news for you, Mr. Garston. Mr. Arbuthnot, you walk back with Dad. I'm going to ask Mr. Garston to go back with me."

"Lucky Garston," laughed Arbuthnot; and the two men, short and tall, parson and manufacturing financier who had been made a baronet at the last New Year's honors, went away together. They were distant connections by marriage, otherwise Arbuthnot would not have chosen this house, for he had many open to him. Sir Lewis Mayder was a rising politician, and the relationship between them gave a covering of decency in Arbuthnot's mind to a vaguely formed idea which had for its centre—Alys Mayder.

Alys Mayder was fully a head taller than her little father; she was well made, dark and handsome, and

at nineteen was quite aware of her own position and value as sole heiress to her father's possessions; but added to this she was a straightforward, capable young woman, who enjoyed her life, and liked to see others enjoy themselves as well. She was as well educated—or as ill—as many other young ladies of position; spoke French and German, could play the piano, and dance, skate, ride, golf, disliked bridge, although forced to play it sometimes, and was in many ways an ideal hostess.

Garston got on with her well, and Alys Mayder was proud of her friendship with the great tenor; perhaps if he had asked for it she would have been willing to give him more than friendship.

They chatted pleasantly in the ordinary inane fashion of small talkers, and then Miss Mayder said cheerfully:

"I have a treat in store for you at the week-end."

"What other treat do I need beyond being your guest?" answered Garston dutifully.

"That's very pretty," the girl retorted; "but I know how you love music, and I have secured the new woman singer as a guest next Saturday. I met her the other day when I was in London, and I expect she will sing if we ask her to, for I have found her very kind-hearted."

"Do you mean Miss Argent?" Garston asked slowly, brain and heart setting themselves in grim opposition.

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"Slightly," answered the tenor rather carelessly;

"yes, she can sing, but I'm not sure whether I can stay over the week-end."

"But you *must*," commanded Miss Mayder, "you literally must, for I told Miss Argent you would be here."

"And what did *she* say?" asked Garston.

"Only that she had heard you sing; but I should not think that she ever *said* much. She is a strange sort of woman altogether, but I've invited a lot of people to meet her. Do you think she will sing? If she won't for me, will she for you?" And Miss Mayder cast him a glance which said, "I expect she will."

"Who can say?" asked Garston lightly.

"I wonder whether Cecil Arbuthnot will like her."

"Arbuthnot's a good fellow," answered Garston, shortly, "but I do not fancy he would get on with Miss Argent."

Something in the man's tone caused Miss Mayder to look at him quickly; Garston was undoubtedly scowling—and the scowl improved the rather placid face.

"I wonder," thought Miss Mayder, "whether he knows Miss Argent more than slightly. Artists are unaccountable people, and it will be rather fun to watch them. If I can get Cecil to be interested too it will be jolly."

The house-party was rather slow, and Garston, feeling generally injured and tired, escaped from it, and went for a walk in the Park by himself, between tea and dinner.

It was with a feeling of relief that he escaped alone from the big Georgian erection which utterly spoilt the wonderful beauty of the late summer landscape. It was Wednesday; on Friday Anthea would come, and Garston felt within himself that if he stayed on and met her he would be in danger of falling desperately in love.

Did he love her now—love this strange woman with her stranger history? Was it only the compelling eyes that drew? Was there a foundation on which to build?

She was now an established success. During the summer she had sung her way upwards, and only once had she been unable to fulfil an engagement from indisposition. Garston pictured her sitting still and rigid with cold fury because her voice had gone thin. He had not seen her since early June, and now fresh from her success—success originating in him—they were to meet.

What would be the result?

Garston was still too rich, too successful, too used to walking on velvet to consider Anthea's possible point of view; he was occupied in wondering what *he* would do, and it hardly occurred to him that the choice might be with Anthea rather than with himself.

Yes, he would stay, and would meet her; then his pulses and his heart leaped, and the strange eyes drew him in memory, and his twenty-six years of living lay very lightly on his soul.

Anthea Argent came just in time to dress for dinner on Friday.

Charles Garston was a punctual man, but on this particular Friday he was dressed and waiting in the drawing-room earlier than he had ever been—and Arbuthnot stood by the fire watching his friend.

All the latter's lazy, indolent calm was gone, and although he was standing motionless, the clergyman could see that every nerve was on the alert.

"Which of the newcomers can it be?" Arbuthnot asked himself. "It is *not* Miss Mayder, I have no rival there: at first I thought I had, and Cousin Alys likes this handsome singer."

In watching his friend's demeanor he forgot to watch the door.

Then Garston suddenly straightened himself, his well-carried fair head lifted itself still higher, and a faint tinge of color crept up into the boyishly clear complexion. Yes, this woman who was now coming slowly up the long drawing-room must be she.

She too was very early.

Had she known that Garston would be waiting?

The parson was accustomed to weigh actions, analyze gestures, and to read the language of souls, and on the whole he was an apt and kindly scholar.

He turned his gaze upon the woman whom Garston was going forward to meet.

A woman young, and yet with a strange air of years upon her; tall and slender, she moved with a royal walk, her copper-colored hair crowning a broad-browed face, her eyes hidden by lowered lids.

Anthea was dressed in black, a soft dusky material that clung to her figure in picturesque outlines. Her

neck and arms were bare, the white flesh showing like marble against the black of her dress, and in the copper-colored hair she wore one jewel, a sapphire which glowed dully.

Garston went to meet her with quick uneven gait. He forgot that Arbuthnot stood by the fire, he forgot that everything he did would be exaggerated by gossip and made public property; he only saw Anthea coming to meet him, Anthea whose personality drew him towards her with compelling force, and for one glance from whose strange eyes he would have imperilled his reputation.

In those few seconds he knew that unless Anthea loved him even as he loved her, his life would have one of those dark gaps which nearly all of us possess.

He caught his breath with a quick gasp, and then his hand was touching Anthea's cold thin one, and he heard her voice saying gravely:

"How do you do, Mr. Garston? It is delightful to see you again."

Garston held her hand firmly, and in a voice that was alarmingly clear, exclaimed:

"Anthea!"

She lifted her eyes, and he met the glance for which he had been longing.

But the language in those strange eyes was an unknown one to the man, and he recovered his self-control, let go the hand that had lain for a moment cold and thin in his, and said:

"Miss Argent, it is an unexpected pleasure to meet

you here. I have been longing to see you and tell you how delighted I am at the great success you have won."

"I have to thank you for compelling the world to open its ears," said Anthea quietly; and then she smiled rather cynically: "I do not have to live in a bed-sitting room now."

"And your voice?" asked Garston, eagerly.

"I think it must be nerves," said Anthea thoughtfully; "it has only gone twice, and on one occasion it was when I had a bad cold."

"That's all right: I always have a sort of *serrement-de-cœur* when I know you have a big thing on"; and Garston spoke quite naturally.

Anthea turned quickly.

"Surely that is Mr. Arbuthnot?" she asked.

"Yes, do you know him?" Garston asked in some surprise.

"He was, or is still for aught I know, the vicar of that riverside parish in which I was living," Anthea replied. "Oh, no, he doesn't know me, but I saw him occasionally in the street, and my landlady used to rave about him. Once I heard him preach."

"What was it like?"

Anthea laughed slightly: "Oh, very good and clear, and logical, but I don't think he forgot for one moment that he was a saint speaking to sinners."

"Shall I introduce him?" asked Garston in amused tones.

"Please; but is he not too good to be one of the house-party?"

"He's a relation of our host," explained Garston, "and a very good fellow. I was at school with him, and he is one of the few men who can touch pitch and not be defiled. Arbuthnot ——"

The clergyman came forward, and Garston introduced the two.

"I was one of your parishioners once, Mr. Arbuthnot," said Anthea, "but you never came to see me."

The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot smiled gravely.

"I have seventeen thousand souls in my parish," he said, "and to see them all would mean seeing about fifty a day, not counting Sundays. Still, please accept my apologies; a district visitor, or one of my lady workers should have been round once a month."

A gleam of amusement lit up Anthea's face, but she made no reply.

"I am to take you in to dinner, Miss Mayder tells me," Garston said, breaking in on the awkward silence.

Anthea continued to talk pleasantly, and Garston watched her for the few seconds that remained before the drawing-room filled.

During the dinner which followed he continued to watch and wonder.

How perfectly she was a woman of the world, the world in which she found herself! And then he remembered with a sudden pang that according to the story of her life which she had told him—she had always been "in the world." She talked well, sometimes to him, sometimes to Arbuthnot, who sat on the other side, and Garston noticed that she ate very little.

"Why don't you eat?" he demanded, rather abruptly.

She lifted her eyelids, and he caught a glance of the eyes, as she answered:

"I know Miss Mayder is expecting me to sing, and if I eat much I shall think my voice is going, and then it *will* go."

"Are you afraid of that?" asked Garston gently.

Again he caught a glimpse of her eyes.

"Yes," she said.

"If I were to sing first," Garston went on very gently, "would it make you less nervous?"

Then he saw her eyes fully.

"I want to hear you sing more than anything else. I think I should forget my nerves then," said Anthea quickly.

"Very well, I will try to arrange it so."

Anthea did not know that Charles was making a great sacrifice for her—the sacrifice of his beloved voice, for he never sang immediately after eating, and in private he sang only to very intimate friends, and always arranged to be the last performer.

She did not know this until Arbuthnot told her, as Charles was speaking to the accompanist after dinner. As he told her Arbuthnot watched the cold face to see if it evinced triumph.

But no line changed, and the parson suddenly found himself wishing that she would raise her eyes.

CHAPTER VII

And though we bid adieu to-day,
We shall not part for ever.

—HERRICK.

THE Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot continued to sit beside Anthea whilst the famous tenor sang. As Garston sang, she opened her eyes, forgetting everything but the sweetness of the sounds that seemed to come in one wonderful stream of enchantment from his lips.

The clergyman felt a sudden thrill when he first saw those strange orbs, but after a few seconds the sensation seemed to settle into his brain, and he too felt attracted and full of desire to have those eyes looking upon him.

Garston went on singing. He sang the room into silence, he sang Anthea's soul into forgetfulness of self, and into a mood which desired better and nobler things than a fickle world's adulation.

When he had ended his song, he came straight to Anthea, and by a gesture invited her to come to the piano.

Then the two great singers side by side walked across the room—Garston tall and handsome, Anthea extraordinarily distinguished looking.

As she walked, Anthea was conscious of the gaze

of the critical eyes of Society—and it amused her, for she felt that as long as she had Garston by her side she could afford to ignore the world's criticism.

Charles Garston opened the music, and stood for one moment looking at the words of the song; then he heard Anthea give a little gasp.

He looked up; Anthea's face was white, her eyes wide open, and she spoke in a quick whisper:

"My voice is going wrong."

"Nonsense!" the tenor answered sternly, "nonsense!"

The girl made an effort, and began to sing.

But she had been right; her voice had lost its strange, weird and surpassingly sweet quality, and it was now thin and weak.

Charles Garston leaned rather heavily on the piano, his color coming and going.

The first verse was over.

Anthea suddenly looked at him, her eyes lit up, and as she met Charles's tragic gaze, she smiled, for her voice came back again, and she finished her song most gloriously.

Then the famous tenor gave her his arm, and led her through the crowd of people, right out onto the terrace.

Arbuthnot came up to Miss Mayder.

"Did you ever hear two such wonderful voices?" he asked.

"No—but I wonder what was wrong with Miss Argent at first," answered Miss Mayder in puzzled tones.

"Nervousness, I expect," was the answer; "but, Alys, I want you to tell me who Miss Argent is, and if Mr. Garston knows her well."

Alys looked at him, and laughed lightly:

"The first you must ask her, and the second him, but I should guess that however much or little they know each other now, in a little while they will know each other much better."

"What do you mean?" asked the parson gravely.

But Alys vouchsafed no answer.

Garston and Anthea had made their way into the fresh cool air, and for a few minutes neither had spoken.

Then the man said:

"I have promised to sing again; will you stay here? You can hear me if you care about it."

"Thank you," answered Anthea.

That was all; then the singer left her, and went back amongst the people, Anthea being left on the terrace alone.

She stood resting her hands on the low stone parapet. Behind her rose the great house, its many windows all lit up, and the light from the drawing-room casting its radiance almost to where she stood.

Before her stretched the woods of Mayder House, and away beyond them sloping hills.

The night was very still and fresh; from the open windows came the murmur of voices, intermixed with occasional laughter, and from the woods beyond came the voices of the night.

A sudden screech from the woods where the strong

had conquered and a hare had died, the distant bark of a fox, the short sharp "twit-twit" of an owl, and from a little distance the striking of a clock.

One, two—and on to eleven.

Anthea's hands suddenly clasped and unclasped, and then she put them again on the parapet, and the cold stone of the wall felt hot to her icy fingers. A hush in the murmur of voices, a pause in the laughter and a few chords struck on the piano, and then out into the coolness and darkness Garston's voice fell on the night air.

It seemed to encircle Anthea's very being and strike down into her soul.

He sang a quaint old song; too lovely to be fashionable, too full of melody both in words and music to be a lasting favorite in a nation that yells "ragtimes" everywhere.

As he sang, the scent of cherry-blossoms seemed to come back to Anthea, and a cool spring wind laden with freshness blew upon her spirit.

The voice sang on, and that which the great tenor had hitherto lacked had come. These were the words he sang:

Bid me to live, and I will live
Thy Protestant to be!
Or bid me love, and I will give
A loving heart to thee.
Bid that heart stay, and it will stay
To honor thy decree!
Or bid it languish quite away,
And't shall do so for thee.

Bid me to weep, and I will weep,
While I have eyes to see!
And having none yet will I keep
A heart to weep for thee.
Bid me despair, and I'll despair
Under that cypress tree
Or bid me die, and I will dare
E'en death to die for thee.
Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me!
And hast command of every part
To live and die for thee.

For a full minute there was silence; then came applause, such as is rarely heard in a drawing-room.

Anthea stood rigid, but a strange shudder passed through her. She was listening, listening for the sound of approaching footsteps.

Charles Garston trod lightly, and he came so quickly that his footfalls hardly sounded.

Arbuthnot and Alys Mayder were still side by side.

"Where has he gone?" asked Alys in rather startled tones.

"Do you know the name of that song?" asked Arbuthnot, smiling.

"No, it's a quaint old one, but I've never heard it sung before." Alys's fingers were twisting rather nervously.

"It's by Robert Herrick, and it's called 'To Anthea.'"

"Well?"

"Is not Miss Argent's name Anthea?"

"So it is, I had quite forgotten," answered Alys lightly.

The tenor had provided a sensation; he had evidently gone straight out to her.

"Lucky girl!"

"Caught at last—but was he serious?"

"She was a success, and the two together, my word!"

"He was singing for her alone."

But the singer had forgotten his surroundings, forgotten his careful avoidance of eccentricity or even ordinary originality: he only knew that out there in the dusk Anthea was waiting for him—the woman whose eyes had drawn him out of himself. He came up to her, and laid one hand upon her shoulder.

Anthea neither spoke nor turned. Charles Garston withdrew his hand, and, taking a step sideways, faced her.

"Do you know why I sang?" he demanded abruptly.

"Yes, I understood."

He drew nearer, and his voice, ordinarily so smooth and sweet, was abrupt and uneven.

"Well, *you* are the very eyes of me, and what am I to you? Anthea, do you love me? You must, you must."

He stood quite motionless, and the unevenness of his voice moved her deeply.

"I love your voice, and you have 'made me,'" Anthea answered very quietly, "and I like you better

than any one else, but I do not think I love you. I think I cannot love any one. I only care to succeed."

"I do not believe it." Stepping forward, he seized her hands, and held them in an agonizing grip.

"No woman, Anthea, with your eyes, could *only like*. I will teach you."

His voice grew dangerously soft, but Anthea still struggled against its seductiveness, though she let her hands lie passively in Garston's grip. She spoke in a troubled voice.

"I am a strange woman," she said, "and have lived through strange scenes, and I think my heart must be like my voice. Supposing it goes 'thin' as well."

"That would not matter," he answered eagerly, with the unseeing egoism of the man in love; "I have love enough for two."

She drew her hands away, and in the dim light Garston saw that her eyelids fell.

"And voice enough, for mine would not matter. No—I do not feel ready to give up everything just when I am succeeding." The tone of her voice was bitter.

"Anthea!" exclaimed Garston, turning away.

"Please don't mind so much."

"Anthea, may I ask you again presently?"

He wheeled round, hope springing into his voice.

Anthea felt strangely moved, though she was a very cold woman, and she held out her hand to the singer, who, after all, was only a boy.

"Yes, Herrick," she said gently, "when you have

finished your tour in America, and when I have faced the world for a while."

For an instant he clasped Anthea wildly to him.

He did not kiss her, just held her tightly, saying rather brokenly: "My darling, my darling, I will come and claim you when the cherry trees blossom again."

Anthea, much to her own astonishment, did not feel angry, only excited and rather "out" of herself. She laughed softly, and for a moment felt happy.

"Ah, here is Mr. Arbuthnot," said Anthea.

Garston went forward, and said to Arbuthnot:

"Miss Argent was feeling faint after her song but is better now; will you bring her in in a few minutes?"

"Certainly, Garston," said the parson courteously, and then, as Garston went into the drawing-room, Arbuthnot went towards Anthea.

CHAPTER VIII

Deep waters noiseless are; and this we know—
That chiding streams betray small depths below.

—HERRICK.

THE tenor went away the next day, and did not see Anthea again. Whereat Anthea was both glad and sorry, but the house-party was disappointed.

The hostess wondered if Anthea had refused him.

Arbuthnot began seriously to cultivate Miss Mayder. She would make an excellent wife for a clergyman who was expecting high preferment; indeed it was possible that the preferment might come through Alys, for her father was very wealthy, and had much influence in high quarters. But Arbuthnot felt that Alys preferred Garston.

Alys Mayder begged Anthea to extend her visit. Anthea, seeing all things from under her lowered lids, stayed on until the middle of the week, and allowed Arbuthnot to study her.

They talked of Garston, they talked of voices, they talked of the danger of overstrain, and he told her that once he had had a touch of "clergyman's throat" and that a doctor friend of his had given him a wonderful gargle which had put him right at once.

She had been much interested in this, and he had felt rather flattered, and then they had talked of philosophy and the Church.

Anthea had plenty of time for talking, for she

played no games; her only recreation seemed to be walking. She seemed to draw a cloudy veil about her, through which only the vague outlines of her personality could be seen.

And this challenged men and women who cared to look beneath the surface of externals. Of these, the clergyman was one.

Anthea knew the value of making herself liked; she knew that moments might come in her after life when even a passing acquaintance might be able to turn the scale in her favor, and therefore with apparent indifference to every one's opinion of her, she in reality went her way very carefully, not going one inch out of her own pathway, but stepping over other people's prejudices, and never treading them under foot.

By the end of her visit she was described as a very good sort, a little strange perhaps, but still very good-natured and kind. None guessed, not even Garston, that this was her first "house-party," that the number of times she had dressed for dinner could be counted on one hand, and that her experience of life had been a grim one, much of it having been passed in continental cafés, from very early years, and that while perhaps she could not gauge the good in men, she could read their evil well, and being able to do so was in a position of worldly advantage.

Something of this Arbuthnot perceived, for, as has been said, he was trained to understand souls, and he understood more of Anthea perhaps than Garston did.

Now the study of a woman by a man, or of a man

by a woman, is one of the most entrancing of occupations; but it has certain drawbacks, not to say dangers. During this week Cecil Arbuthnot studied Anthea very closely, and by the end of the week, although he felt that it was almost time to begin showing that Alys Mayder had the greater influence upon him, he hesitated to give up his examination of her character. He felt it was his duty as a clergyman to demonstrate to her that her conception of men was too low. He thought that it would probably be a revelation to her to know something of the mind of an Arbuthnot, and that Arbuthnot—the Reverend Cecil.

Of course he did not formulate all this, for he was much too well bred ever to lay bare himself to himself; but this was broadly his mental attitude.

For he was first an Arbuthnot, and second a clergyman.

One is apt to forget that a clergyman is always Smith, or Brown, or Robinson as well as a parson.

When Anthea Argent took her departure, she left her hostess puzzled.

Alys Mayder could not make out whether she had "caught" Arbuthnot as well as Garston.

Garston had gone to America: would their engagement be announced on his return, or would she follow him there, and get married in some hole and corner way?

Alys considered that Anthea was very clever: that cold quietness was an excellent pose, and it would enable the star singer to go to almost any lengths before she was discovered. Alys knew with certainty

that within Anthea somewhere lay a volcano, and when Anthea bade her farewell she told her she hoped they would see more of each other.

Anthea went her way with her lowered lids, and of all the guests none but Arbuthnot knew of her strange eyes. And he had only seen them once, that once when Garston sang.

Those who study mankind know that it is the little things that attract so strongly; the little mannerisms, the quick glance sideways, the pathetic upward look, certain intonations, expressions on the face which one unconsciously desires to reproduce, an arch of the eyebrows, a turn of the head—these things are the unbreakable links. And Anthea's eyes, although she herself hated them, were one of her chief attractions.

Arbuthnot decided to wait before he approached Sir Lewis Mayder on the subject of his daughter. She was nineteen, there was plenty of time, and his parish called him.

So he went back to his South London work, and continued his labors in that vast and somewhat hopeless field.

He supervised a mission from one of the universities, and fathered the boys of twenty or so who came to show the way of living to weary men and women whose lives were *not* worth living. He thoroughly approved of university missions: they taught the young men something.

The winter proved a very severe one, and Arbuthnot labored without ceasing, giving freely time, money and strength.

Twice only did he spend where he might have saved. And that twice was when he went to hear Anthea sing. He told himself that press of work alone prevented him from seeing the Mayders frequently that winter.

Anthea rose in the public estimation by leaps and bounds, the "thin" voice seemed to be a thing of the past, and although the dread of it lay deep within her mind, she ceased to fear it hourly. She had told Garston that she lived for two objects, and one of them was success; this one of the two was certainly attained.

She moved on through her life, cold and still, guarding well the secret of her eyes.

The different colors were to her a symbol of a hateful origin, and in her eyes lay the second object of her life.

As the weeks went on, she grew more and more undecided as regarded her course of action with Garston. Sometimes the memory of his voice—and it was far more his voice than himself—seemed to draw her to him, and then marriage with him meant an absolutely assured future.

Anthea learned that he was a wealthy man, and that though he lived in comfort he did not fling his money away. Many tales she heard about the favorite of fortune: that whilst many women had been in love with him and had pursued him, he had only been in love with few, and there were no public scandals whatever attached to his name.

Did she love him? Could she love any one beyond herself? Suppose she lost her voice altogether! Ah,

if only there were not that ghastly doubt at the root of her life! If she lost her voice, it would be well for her to be Charles Garston's wife.

But would being Charles Garston's wife cause her to lose her voice? And so through the months of bitter cold Anthea weighed the question. The tenor did not write to her, but she found herself following every detail of his triumphant progress through that land of clever youth—America. It did not occur to her that he was forgetting her.

March came, with days of glittering sunshine and mocking bitter winds. In early April Garston's tour would end. Anthea's engagements were over for a while; her voice was not improved by a heavy cold, and her voice specialist advised her to rest it for a while.

As she was wondering where to go, she received a cablegram from Garston.

"Read you are suffering from a cold. Have arranged for you to rest at Cherry Isle. Will see you there on 18th April."

Anthea read the cablegram over and over again, her eyes widely open.

Would going be tantamount to accepting Garston's love?

Not necessarily—for she had promised to meet him there.

Not necessarily to him, that is—but if she went she knew that she would agree to marry him.

And she felt that she was about to lose her freedom.

CHAPTER IX

Only come and see Him rest,
A princely Babe, in mother's breast.

—HERRICK.

CHERRY FARM lay in the grip of winter; icy north-east winds blew through the leafless orchards, the grass beneath the bending trees glittered with frail, frost diamonds, the ground was hard as iron, and though the sun gave light, he sent down no particle of warmth.

Jim Sanders, the young farmer, was coming back from a distant part of his orchards, where some of his best trees had suffered severely, their biggest branches being wrested from their sockets by the fierceness of the cruel gale which had blown now for nearly twenty-four hours.

It was a hard struggle to make his way, and though his cap was pulled low down over his eyes and his collar turned high up to his ears, the raw sharp air bit into him with painful vigor.

But Jim Sanders did not care, not he.

What mattered the searching keenness of the wind, what mattered if his trees were damaged, what mattered the frozen hardness of the world outside? Inside his home glorious summer was at its height. He had never dreamed that the world could hold such glories, that things which meant so much

could have happened to him. Why, it seemed as if the heavens had opened and shown him the splendor of the Creator, and all just for him, plain Jim Sanders.

When he thought of the wonder of it all, he caught his breath, and tears forced their way with a sudden smart into his eyes.

For at home, up-stairs in the low-ceilinged bedroom, shut away from all the storm, in the big wooden bed, lay his wife Bessie, and by her—his first-born son. Late last night the babe had come into the world, come, a thought from God garbed in flesh, through the wild storm of quivering flesh and pitiless pain, into a haven of mother-love and father-worship.

And Jim, waiting below with clenched hands and tear-stained face, had, as midnight struck, been summoned up-stairs, and had beheld the greatest wonder that the world ever knew, a new-born baby.

His wife Bessie lay still and exhausted, but she smiled at him with her eyes as he leaned over her. And then he had seen his child.

Ugly and small, and red and featureless?

Not a bit of it! The sweetest little blossom that ever grew on a cherry tree, and Jim thought so from his very heart.

This infant was getting on for eighteen hours old, and Jim was to see his wife for five minutes, if he were very quiet.

So he fought homeward through the winter storm. A letter was in the kitchen, waiting for him, but what mattered letters? He got into dry garments, washed his hands, and rubbed his nose until it glowed, for it

would never do to come in cold to Bessie's room. He put on slippers, and wished he was not so heavy on his feet, and that his hands were not so big and red. When the nurse summoned him he was literally shaking with anticipation.

As he went up the steep stairs, the wind blew past the lattice windows, shrieking with an uncanny sound, and the farmer shivered.

Bessie lay in her bed, still pale, but perfectly happy, and her honest blue-gray eyes were filled with love as she smiled at Jim cheerfully.

"You shall have ten minutes, Mr. Sanders," said the nurse, a homely cheerful woman, who was rather less ignorant of her work than numbers of maternity nurses. "I'll come back as soon as your time is up, for baby has to be fed then, and you shall see me lift him up."

With a nod and a warning: "Now, Mrs. Sanders, mind you keep quiet," the nurse went away.

Jim put a chair by the bed, and, sitting down, held out his hand for his wife to hold; she put hers into his big round red one.

"Eh, lass," he said, "and how are ye to-night?"

"Fine, Jim," she answered lovingly; "and nurse says he's the finest boy she ever nursed."

"Well, so I thought last night," agreed Jim; "I say, lass, what's his name to be? If't had been a lass I'd have called it 'Lizbeth after you, but, seeing as it's a lad, you've the naming of it."

"I've a fancy, Jim, lad," said his wife.

"Anything you fancy you've only got to name,"

said Jim heartily, holding his wife's broad work-hardened hand firmly in his.

"Ye know the singer, who you found from his likeness was the famous Mr. Garston?"

"Yes, lass, would ye like the boy to be named Garston?"

"Not I," and Bessie smiled; "first name's James, o' course. But I want none other but you, lad, to be called 'Jim,' and the boy would sure to be called Jim or Jimmy, and it's *you* that's Jim, and naught else. So I was thinkin'—you know the old song, 'Cherry Ripe,' that he sang?"

"I know, lass. Why, the sound of it was honey in my ears, so to speak." Jim's own voice grew softer at the thought.

"Well," went on the wife rather bashfully, "I thought I'd like the lad called James Herrick, and call him Herrick. He was the man, a parson too, who made up the song."

"Herrick!" repeated James, musingly, "yes, it'ull do, and p'r'aps the lad will sing. I say, Bessie, lass, just supposin' he grows up clever, or goes on the stage, or even turns into a scholar."

"I'll be proud of him anyway," declared the young mother fervently, "and he'll be a good boy, I know he will, and 'ull help us fine. Oh, Jim! I *do* think the Lord has been wonderful good to us!"

"Amen! So do I," answered Jim, with simple reverence; "and you and I, lass, will have to learn a few things so as us may teach the lad."

The nurse came back as he spoke, and lifted the

baby from its cradle, and told Jim to come and look. Jim bent over the infant, and touched its cheek; the infant's hand, waving aimlessly, fastened itself onto his hard weather-stained finger.

Somehow the feel of that tiny hand, not nearly as big as his thumb, caused a choking to come into the young father's throat, and a sudden moisture to his eyes, for in supreme moments we are poets, and Jim never forgot through the hard years of his life that first clinging touch of his baby's hand.

"Now, Mr. Sanders, off you go," commanded the nurse cheerfully, totally oblivious of poetry. Babies were her profession, and it is only to the very few of us that our profession retains its poetry.

Jim kissed his wife, and went down-stairs, had his supper, lit his pipe, and then remembered his letter.

He opened it and looked at the signature. He read "Charles Garston."

"Here's something to tell Bessie. Now what does he say?"

"Dear Mr. Sanders,—You promised to do anything I asked when I sang. Do you remember me singing 'Cherry Ripe'? Well, I want you to take in a lodger on the first of April for a few days. She is a famous singer, and is the lady who had tea with me. If all goes well we will sing you a duet.

"I shall consider it a great favor if your wife, to whom remember me kindly, will be so kind as to consent.

"Yours very sincerely,
"CHARLES GARSTON."

Jim whistled, and then murmured: "All Fool's Day!

But he don't think o' that. Well, the wife 'ull be strong by then, and if he will sing, why, 'twill more than pay, and the money will pay all the bills and nurse's cash too."

When Jim spoke to Bessie about it a few days later, she cheerfully agreed, and the coming lodger occupied their minds a good deal.

"It's a case with our singer," said Bessie shrewdly, "or he would never have written so. He met her here, and here he's goin' to pop the question. Will the blossoms be out, think ye, Jim?"

Jim cast an eye up at the window, and shook his head.

"'Tisn't likely," he answered; "if the wind changes and the frost goes perhaps the buds will show; but I doubt it. Say, lass, did ye like her?"

"I only saw her pass like," answered Bessie, thoughtfully; "she walked rare and well, and held her head high, and her hair looked like a new penny in the sun; but I never got a glimpse of her face."

"Well, let's hope she'll make him happy, for he was a real gentleman," remarked Jim. And then the baby cried, and Jim, who had become quite clever in the art of dandling, hushed him and rocked him to sleep. The young mother watched her two men folk with swelling pride, and then said rather hesitatingly:

"Say, Jim, we won't have him christened yet a while."

Jim laughed:

"I see through ye, lass; ye're after the singers for god-dad and mam."

Bessie blushed. "Yes," she said, firmly, "one's bound to think o' t' future, and my boy shall have everything to help him on."

"So he shall then; but his best helper will be his mother," said Jim, smiling affectionately at his wife.

On the first of April Anthea left London. Garston would see her on the 18th; that gave her nearly three weeks. She would rest and get her voice right. The dry east winds always suited her.

She wrote to Bessie Sanders, and told her the hour of her arrival.

She traveled first-class, and her compartment was empty. It was nearly a year ago since she had pawned her possessions to obtain the wherewithal to travel third-class to fulfil her engagement.

Yes, she had conquered fate, and if her voice failed her, she had a balance at her bankers.

Her future was secured from the temporal point of view. Anthea had flung all her energies, all her knowledge, into the battle; one by one she went over again the steps she had taken to attain her present position: every one had been carefully thought out, every one had been foreseen. Even this present action of hers, this apparent yielding to Garston's love, was the result of a carefully outlined policy.

The world should succumb to her entirely.

This was her determination, and for this she lived.

She was nearly twenty-two, young in years, but very old in knowledge, and her soul was in its infancy. Some souls stay in that stage forever.

She was nameless, and this bitter thought burned

deep within her brooding spirit. If she married Charles Garston her name would be a good one.

She had told Garston her history—in a moment of bitter defiance—and she had never regretted doing so; truth was always best, for untruth has a way of rearing its gaily decked head at the wrong moment.

Ah! here was her stopping place, and a covered car awaiting her!

And then they were speeding at a reckless rate through the still winter-bound country.

The hedges and trees were bare, but if Anthea had descended from the car and had looked closely, she would have seen that the branches and brambles were reddening towards blossom.

First comes the faint red-brown tint, and then the pale sweet green, and, despite the bareness of Nature, the birds were twittering and chirping, and hurrying about in a state of immense activity.

Up and down the roads, past the village church, through the tidy little village, past the Bull's Head Inn, and then into the land of the cherry orchards.

Here Anthea, who had been leaning back in the car, holding her furs closely round her, bent forward and noted the havoc that the gales had made.

She shivered. What a bleak land it was! And yet she remembered it as very lovely.

It was with an unreasonable sense of disappointment that she perceived the farm was square and rather ugly without its garment of creepers; for although there was ivy, it had not grown on the front of the house.

The car pulled up, and Jim stood, smiling but awkward, at the door.

He and Bessie had been looking forward intensely to seeing their singer's lady; they felt a sort of proprietary right in her, quite forgetting that she had never seen them, and that to her they were but Sanders and his wife of Cherry Blossom Farm.

Jim felt unreasonably hurt when she stepped out of the car and walked slowly up the winding path towards the farm, with only a quiet "Good-morning."

"She's proud," he said, bitterly. As he followed her with her lighter luggage, Bessie came eagerly to the door.

At this instant, the baby, generally a most discreet and trustworthy personage, forgot his manners, and began to cry, and the cry became a yell.

Bessie had to choose between welcoming her lodger into a house from which issued a very excellent imitation of a hunted pig, or appearing at the door with an infant in her arms, and she wisely chose the lesser of the two evils. Snatching up the son, the Herrick of the future, she squeezed him into breathless silence, and hurried back to the door.

Anthea was waiting on the threshold, standing quite still, and looking about her indifferently from under her lowered lids.

It would be rather tiresome if that baby cried much, but the place was clean, and where cleanliness was it meant the mother was a good manager.

Bessie had expected Anthea to shake hands with her, but Anthea was busy with her furs.

"This is your room, Miss," said Bessie rather abruptly; "you would like to come straight up, and your sitting-room is ready. There are fires in both rooms, and I'll bring dinner when you ring."

Anthea thanked her, and Bessie, rather grimly handing the baby to Jim, led the way up-stairs.

The room faced east, and was large and airy. Bessie had raided the house to furnish it. The sitting-room on the other side of the house faced east also, and had a south window.

Anthea looked round casually, though she really did not mean to be unkind.

"Thank you," she said, "these rooms will do very well. I only want to rest and be quiet."

Bessie stood by the door a moment, swallowing, I regret to say, slightly audibly.

"If there's anything you want, you must say, Miss Argent," she said slowly; "you see we aren't used to letting lodgin's, and we only done it to please Mr. Garston."

"It's very good of you," said Anthea politely, throwing her furs on the bed; "everything is admirable."

Bessie shut the door with decided emphasis.

"She's got cat's eyes, only half open," she said, indignantly, to her husband, as she took the baby from him. "I'm glad you're a boy, my poppet," and she kissed her child.

"Yes, she sort of slapped me in the face," said Jim plaintively, "but she's had a cold drive, ye know."

"I expect she's nervous, for it's tryin' work waitin'

to be asked," said Bessie wisely. "Why, the evenin' afore you popped the question, Jim, lad, I was all of a tremble, and mother said there was no bearin' with me."

Jim grinned: "And I thought ye were taken by surprise, lass, and never dreamed that I loved you. Well, there's no being upsides with the lasses. Miss Argent is no end of a swell, and don't know what want is like. I expect she will sorter get more sociable as time goes. Now that I've got a few minutes to spare like, I'll hold Herrick while you step about."

Bessie laughed cheerily.

"He's quiet now, lad, and you've the easiest job. There, my poppet, go to daddy."

CHAPTER X

He who plucks the sweets shall prove
Many thorns to be in love.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA woke the next morning to the sound of rain upon the windows, and for three days it rained without ceasing. Then the sun came out with April's vigor, and Nature appeared to be making up for lost time, and it seemed as if the blossoms *would* bloom in time for Charles Garston's coming after all.

Anthea did not advance in the Sanders' favor. She was always polite, but never unbent, and although the baby cried as little as a baby could be expected to do, yet the sound of its voice was at times very annoying. Bessie felt that Miss Argent was annoyed, and the mother in her resented it. Jim on his wife's behalf, and somewhat on his own, sided with her.

Anthea's cold went when the sun came, but she preferred to rest her voice entirely. The Sanders hoped she would sing to them, but she never did, and they considered her " stuck up " in consequence.

Altogether Anthea's visit was not a success.

Nor was it a success to Anthea herself. Had she been busy, she would have brooded less; but now, thinking clearly with her cold keen intellect, she knew

that she did *not love* Charles Garston, and that as far as she knew herself she would never love any one.

Should she then marry him?

Possibly—on one condition.

She would lay her soul before him, tell him how she regarded life, and, then, if he still desired it, she would say "yes."

For although her voice seemed in perfect condition, beneath her success was the perpetual dread.

If her voice went, she would be nobody, while if it went when she was married, she would be Mrs. Charles Garston, a big factor in the social world.

The voice specialist whom she had recently consulted had told her that all the chords seemed much stronger than when he had seen her some months before.

Of the man, Charles Garston, and his life, she hardly thought.

But then Garston was also only thinking of himself, although from a less worldly point of view.

Anthea found herself watching the cherry trees with a strange intentness.

Would they blossom before the singer came? It was now the second week in April, and he would come before the third was ended.

The land looked very lovely in its first sweet infancy.

Gentle breezes blew, instead of the wild hurricanes of twelve days back, and the trees were all trembling with the delight of coming life.

She could not exactly tell why she wanted Charles to come to her under the cherry blossom, but she did;

and one day, when the clouds came up and a chill wind blew, she was really cross, and spoke quite sharply to Bessie about the baby's crying.

But Bessie did not mind. In fact, it showed her that she and Anthea could meet on common ground. She saw in the light of her own love for Jim that Anthea was worried, and she answered her gently.

"I'm that sorry, Miss; but do you know, I think it's the cold to-day that makes baby cross. Jim says it will shine to-morrow."

"Does he?" asked Anthea, eagerly, and she turned to Bessie with wide open eyes for an instant.

Bessie, however, was looking out of the window, and she made answer:

"Yes, and Jim knows all the tricks of the weather. He says the blossoms 'ull be out before next week, and he says they should be thicker than ever."

The seventeenth of April came, and the trees had blossomed. Anthea stood on the hillside looking down on the avenue of trees. The sky above her was a deep clear blue, and here and there, low down, were piled huge mountains of clouds glittering in the sunlight with perfect whiteness. Everywhere rose the cherry trees, freshly green; their white blossoms, just tinged with pink and lilac, filled the air with a delicate fragrance.

Round about their roots, in the rough grass that grew beneath the trees the celandines shone yellow, and here and there a primrose, pale and lovely, gleamed; anemones shook their heads in the faint chill breeze, wind flowers too dainty and short lived to sur-

vive plucking. From a field far away came the call of the lambs.

From far above her head fell the song of larks, and Anthea, to whom Nature as a rule did not appeal, stood looking about her with real delight. She felt the quick rush of her own blood leaping in union with the spring of Nature, and, holding her hat in her hand, she stood; she forgot all cares and all things ugly.

With wide open eyes she watched the gentle movement in the branches of the cherry trees.

And Charles Garston coming up the slope behind her came at exactly the right moment.

He came up the slope almost noiselessly, and the wind which blew in his face carried away any sound that might have been audible. He watched Anthea for a moment before he spoke.

She was looking upwards, and the slight wind was blowing the copper-colored hair into disorder; a faint color was in her cheeks, her lips were slightly parted, and her eyes were shining with pleasure.

The whole woman was younger, more childlike, sweeter than he had ever seen her before, and his love leaped up in mastery.

"Anthea!"

She turned suddenly. The next second his arms were about her, and he was kissing her strange eyes, and smoothing the ruffled copper-colored hair.

"You will be my wife?" he whispered.

And forgetful of all her objections, heedless of her own knowledge of herself, she answered:

"Yes."

For a while she was perfectly happy, and Garston was in heaven. They spoke in short sentences, the old questions and the old answers. And then Anthea asked why he had come a day sooner than he had said.

"I came as soon as the trees blossomed," he answered, tenderly. "I have been home some days, and Jim Sanders had orders to let me know when the blossoms were out. I hope you like the two—they seemed to me a very attractive and simple couple."

"They are very attentive," answered Anthea, casually; "but Herrick ——"

"Are you going to call me that always?" the man interrupted tenderly.

Anthea smiled up at him; she was tall, but he was taller, and they still stood on the hillside.

"I never could call you Charles, or Charlie; neither name seems to suit you. But I must tell you something. I don't like lies, they have such a trick of cropping up in unexpected places."

"Is that your only objection?" laughed Garston.

"Nearly the whole of it; but what I want to tell you is this: You remember when we first met?"

"I have never seen a finer entrance than you made—it was done to perfection." Again he laughed. "You are going to tell me that it *was* a premeditated entrance."

"Yes," said Anthea calmly. "I, of course, knew you by sight, and I followed you, hoping that chance would make us acquainted, but it was only for the sake of my career, for, Mr. Garston"—she drew a few steps away—"that is still what I care for chiefly."

Her eyes looked into his fiercely.

The man held his hands out, saying tenderly:

"I don't believe that, Anthea. Of course, we love our voices; but I think we love each other as well. Come, dear, forget worldliness, and the world—you love me."

Anthea hesitated, and then laughed slightly.

"I suppose I must. I have never allowed any one else to kiss me before, and certainly I love your voice."

"My enemies say I *am* my voice," he cried gaily, "so that will be quite all right."

"And supposing my voice goes?" Anthea asked abruptly.

"That would not matter, for *you* would remain," replied Garston, drawing her quickly to him.

The artist in Anthea was generations older than the woman, and the artist rose in rebellion; but the newly-born woman was kissed into silence.

"You told me once," he said presently, "that you had two objects in life. You said your voice was one; what is the other?"

Her eyelids fell and she answered rather coldly:

"It is one very difficult of attainment, and so I prefer not to mention it."

"As you like, my dearest," said Garston, quickly; "but anything you set yourself to do, I should say, was in a fair way of being done."

She gave him one quick look, a strange one, but made no answer.

Presently they passed under the cherry trees, under the dainty lovely blossoms and on to the farm door.

There Bessie and her husband made Garston welcome, congratulated him and Anthea, and showed him the baby.

With his quick delightful friendliness, he admired the child, and spoke of Anthea and of the lovely blossoms which had bloomed for their betrothal.

Anthea, with her eyes shielded by their lids, stood listening, rather coldly.

CHAPTER XI

Cheek and eye and lip and chin,
These are traps to take fools in.

—HERRICK.

LENT was late that year and Easter was well beyond the middle of April. The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot was pale and worn after a hard six weeks' work. The east winds had been very trying, and the heat coming so suddenly after the piercing cold took the strength out of every one.

His South London parish was a heavy burden, and minor worries seemed to have accumulated during this particular spring time. His senior curate had resigned owing to a difference of opinion in ritual. Arbuthnot was no ritualist, he was a safe and correct Anglican, with strong leanings towards orderliness and *some* ornamentation. The senior curate developed rather suddenly into a ritualist of an advanced description, and when he read the Gospel at the midday celebration, he kissed the pages many times and bowed continually. Arbuthnot limited him to two kisses and three bows, and the senior curate, feeling that it was due to his conscience to resign, obtained a curacy at a neighboring church. He was tall, young, red-haired, fair and handsome; moreover, he was cursed with a small income of his own, and had come to Arbuthnot for a nominal salary. In consequence of his resignation, several female members of the well-to-do class changed

their place of worship, and this in a poor parish meant a serious monetary loss.

In a personal sense this was an annoyance to Arbuthnot, for up till now his pale good looks, his height, and his evidence of aristocratic lineage had always brought him in an easy first, and the withdrawal of even despised adoration is unpleasant.

Then the winter had seen strikes, and the distress amongst his poor parishioners had been terrible. Although as a faithful priest of the "Establishment" he disapproved of strikes, yet as a priest of God he had to sympathize with their victims—the strikers themselves and their families.

Then again, as a man of intellect, he had to admit that his labors were as naught, that the methods he was conscientiously following were utterly futile. In addition he had private worries.

He had been offered by a private patron a valuable living—nine hundred a year in a pleasant country town—and he had felt bound to refuse it.

He did not think a man of his health and strength should accept so easy a post; it was not fair to his parish to leave it at this juncture; if he had accepted this living he would have felt bound in honor to work there for at least five years. The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot was a very honorable man, and there were at least three deans, and twice as many canons, not to mention several bishops, suffering from senile decay, who really *could* not last out much longer, and the Rev. Cecil knew that his name had a very good place in all the prearranged lists of likely candidates.

Sir Lewis Mayder, one of his chief channels through which preferment might come, had not been pleased at his refusal to spend a few days with him and his daughter. He had pleaded press of work and lack of time, an absolutely genuine plea, but he had felt within himself that had he gone to stay with Sir Lewis he would have gone as a suitor for his daughter's hand. It had been a semi-understood thing for years that he was well in the "running" for this—and he did not feel inclined to enter for the final heat.

The spell of Anthea's eyes and voice was upon him, and his cold intellectual nature was thrilled by her personality, whilst Alys Mayder's shrewdness, good looks and good nature left him completely unmoved. He was wise enough to recognize that Alys would be a most suitable wife for him, whilst marriage with Anthea would probably prove disastrous. But wisdom does not always speak with an insistent voice at thirty, and Arbuthnot was frankly ill at ease.

See him now, as he stands in his coldly correct study, good books in good bindings, good furniture in perfect taste; good pictures, few in number; the window opened wide, the fire burning brightly; all his papers in order; his writing table ready for work, with blotter, pens, inks, pencils, scissors, rulers, clips, Clergy List, post-office guide, latest blue book—all ready for reference.

Everything is in perfect taste, including the Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot, standing before his fire, garbed in correctly shabby, well-kept clerical garments.

The parson had returned from a turbulent vestry

meeting, wherein all his approvers had failed to appear and only malcontents were present. It had been hard and exhausting work to satisfy them without budging an inch from his position.

He had triumphed but he was tired, and when his parlor maid announced: "Sir Lewis Mayder to see you, sir," he frowned, folded his lips together, and had only just time to summon a smile of welcome to his face before Sir Lewis, smart, small and dapper, came in.

"How do you do, my dear boy?" began the baronet, jovially; "you're looking pale and done up. I've come from Alys to beg you to spend a few days with us down at Mayder House."

"It's very good of you and Alys, Sir," answered Arbuthnot, shaking hands. "I was thinking of getting away for a few days now that Easter is over, but my plans are still uncertain."

"And I want to have a few words with you," went on Sir Lewis.

"Shall we have tea then, and you can talk, for I've just been driving an eight-in-hand at my vestry, and they have jibbed, and I'm tired," smiled Cecil.

The two men talked commonplaces until the tea was brought in, and when they were provided with cups and were comfortable—Cecil's tea was always good—Sir Lewis began:

"I don't know if it's common property yet, but the Dean of Cosdom is going to resign."

"We've heard that rumor dozens of times," Cecil made answer calmly, although had any one been feel-

ing his pulse he would have felt the sudden leap it gave.

"Yes, but this time it's a fact," retorted Sir Lewis, glibly. "I was with a friend of mine who guarantees it."

"Well, it's time enough," answered Cecil, drily.

"Well, I only said that in passing; but what I really want to talk about is your cousin Alys," said Sir Lewis, shifting himself slightly in the easy chair.

"Yes?"

"She doesn't seem to be herself; she's not happy, I think, and if you could cheer her up it would be a good thing."

"I am sorry to hear she isn't well," answered Cecil, gravely, who had read his cousin's name in a list of those present at a big function the night before.

"She isn't ill," said Sir Lewis, quickly, "but not up to the mark, you know. . . . I've a bit of news about myself for you."

Cecil looked politely interested and waited for the other to proceed.

"Yes, it is not every one to whom I would tell it," went on Sir Lewis, confidentially; "but you are one of the family, as things stand, *even* at the present. Well, my boy, congratulate me; I am *thinking* of getting married again."

"Congratulate you heartily, sir," said Cecil, calmly; "when is it to be?"

"Oh, it has not gone so far as *that* yet," answered Sir Lewis, casting a quick glance at Cecil; "I said I was thinking of it. I don't know if Alys has heard

of it, and anyway I am worried about her. She's been such a good girl, and such a first-rate mistress of my house, that I cannot bear the thought of dethroning her. That's how it is, my boy."

"Yes, it would be rough on her, unless she found another home to rule as gracefully as she does yours," answered Cecil slowly.

"Well, I've half an idea that she may. I hope he'll be as fine a fellow as yourself, Cecil. And now good-bye to you; you'll look us up early next week?" and Sir Lewis scrambled nimbly to his feet and held out his hand to Cecil.

"I'll let you know," the clergyman answered thoughtfully. "I've several engagements next week, but perhaps I can arrange it. Good-bye! Please give my love to Alys."

Cecil went to the door with Sir Lewis, shook hands again, and then returned to his study.

Of course, he knew what Sir Lewis meant, and equally, of course, he knew that Sir Lewis knew that he knew. It was all perfectly straightforward really, only it had to be dressed in correct language. Moreover, Sir Lewis knew that he, Cecil, had been fond of Alys, soberly and staidly; what he did not know was that the clergyman had looked into a pair of eyes, one of which was brown and the other blue.

The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot went back into his study, and sat in his favorite armchair before the fire. He had three-quarters of an hour before even-song; one of the other clergy was taking it, but he always made a point of being there unless he had some other engage-

ment, and he felt that these three-quarters of an hour were momentous.

He was a man who was able to form a resolution and keep to it unwaveringly.

If he accepted the invitation it would mean two things—he would become Dean of Cosdom, and he would become the husband of Alys; or, at least, he would offer himself for that post.

Could he as a Christian gentleman do this?

Slowly he pondered, searching his mind and his soul, but strange to say he did not probe the third part of the trinity, his heart.

It was no good objecting to the method of promotion; he knew only too well that all preferment was managed in this or similar ways. Merit had no chance by itself; it must be merit plus influence, and he, fortunately, had both.

He had always meant to marry Alys if she would have him, and he thought she would. He moved in his chair, and glanced round the room. A paper was crumpled and badly folded in the paper rack, and he rose to his feet, and taking it out again, mechanically began to smooth the folds; as he did so, his eye caught the name:

ANTHEA ARGENT
LAST APPEARANCE OF THIS FAMOUS SINGER THIS SEASON

"We understand that Miss Argent has entirely recovered from her late slight indisposition. She will appear at one concert only, as she has been medically

advised to rest until the early autumn. Miss Argent owes it to the world at large to take the utmost care of her marvelous voice."

Arbuthnot sat down rather suddenly.

Anthea was singing on Monday. Well, he would go and hear her and judge to what extent he was under her influence.

Once the resolution was made, he dismissed the whole question from his mind, and went to even-song. So well had he learned the art of self-control, that although his curate was three minutes late, he did not begin the service himself. To any one who understands the immense sacrifice of an opportunity this subjugation of himself entailed, the Vicar of St. Athanasius will appear almost saintly.

Next Sunday morning he preached one of his most logical, convincing and beautifully worded sermons, and on the Monday evening he went up to hear Anthea Argent sing.

He had had the wisdom to secure a ticket beforehand. It was a chance one returned by its first buyer, and he congratulated himself upon his wisdom when he saw the immense queue stretching right and left. The huge hall was crammed, every seat filled.

Cecil Arbuthnot coldly, calmly attentive to the various singers, waited for the one woman's appearance with strange throbbings of his well-balanced heart.

She stood at last before him, tall and beautifully dressed, but about her there was an intangible change. Something had gone, something had come; something

been lost, something gained. As Cecil listened he forgot all about Alys Mayder, and his lips settled down into a stern line.

A shower of melody, a glory of sound, a perfect voice without a flaw, and then she bowed and went.

"She never grants an encore," said some one near him; nor did she to-night.

Arbuthnot left the hall.

He stood outside in the street. It was still light, since it was barely nine o'clock. A wagon passed him and the horse was brave with ribbons. It was the first of May, he suddenly remembered.

"Mr. Arbuthnot!"

A voice called him, and he saw that a car had drawn up opposite to him, and that it was Anthea who called to him.

He came forward and greeted her.

"May I give you a lift?" she asked; "I am going back to the Carlton, where I am staying to-night."

Then Cecil Arbuthnot told an indirect lie, and it was one of the very few he had ever uttered.

"It will be very good of you if you will," he answered in his quiet voice, "cabs and cars are at a premium to-night."

He opened the door and stepped in.

Anthea glanced at him from beneath her eyelids, and noticed that he was looking paler and older than when she had last seen him. Moved by a very rare impulse of pity, induced by her own frame of mind, she said kindly:

"You are looking far from well, Mr. Arbuthnot."

He took no notice of the remark, but said rather absently:

"How gloriously you sang to-night, Miss Argent. Music is the one treat I have indulged in this winter, and I have been to hear *you* sing three times."

Something in his tone caused Anthea to turn her head and look quickly at him, and he caught a glimpse of her eyes; but she saw only a very correct parson, whose face was as calm as usual.

But the glint of her eyes had acted on Arbuthnot as some magic philtre, and he spoke rather stiffly, looking rigidly at the back of the chauffeur.

"I wish to consult you about a very important matter. I wonder if you could give me a few minutes to-night."

The successful singer was in a gracious mood, and she answered pleasantly:

"I hardly ever see any one after singing, but," she seemed to Arbuthnot to be making a rapid calculation, "if you will promise not to stay more than a few minutes, I shall be glad to see you when we reach the Carlton."

"Thank you," he answered, very gravely.

Anthea was slightly puzzled. What did he want to say? He could not surely want to propose to her? True, they had seen a good deal of each other during that week with the Mayders, but she knew him much too slightly.

Anthea was observant, but she had not noticed that time is of no account—occasionally.

Of course, since she had become famous the number

of her admirers had been legion. A few of them had been attracted by her personality, the majority by the glamour that surrounds a public character of any sort —particularly of Anthea's sort and sex. It was, however, quite out of the question to place Cecil Arbuthnot in either of these categories.

He was so lofty, so very correct. As a matter of fact, he made Anthea feel rather young and childish, just a little bit as if she had been a naughty girl, and she felt relieved when the car pulled up at the hotel.

"I do not like lifts," said Anthea over her shoulder to Cecil; "we will go up the stairs; my sitting-room is on the first floor."

She went up to the table and stood there a moment as Cecil shut the door, and then she threw off her cloak and said:

"You have dined, I suppose?"

"Yes."

Cecil Arbuthnot left the window towards which he had walked on his entrance, and faced Anthea. She was on one side of the oval table, he on the other.

"Miss Argent," he began abruptly, "a deanery lies within my grasp."

Anthea, considerably astonished and wondering if he wanted her to sing in the cathedral, answered politely:

"I congratulate you."

"It is not mine," corrected Cecil; "I said it lay within my grasp."

"I do not understand," she said coldly, her eyelids lowered and her manner stiff.

Cecil Arbuthnot put his white hands upon the table, and the pressure drove the blood beneath the well-kept nails.

"How should you?" he asked almost in a whisper. "But if I accept the deanery, then I shall not be free to say to you that which I have come to say."

Anthea drew back suddenly, and lifting her eyes looked straight into Cecil's white face.

"Oh, don't!" she began hurriedly.

But Cecil had seen her eyes again, those eyes so repellent to some men and women, so strangely attractive to others, and he leaned forward and said in a low quick voice:

"No, I must speak. Anthea, I love you; although it is probably out of the question that you love me."

"Please, please, don't! Oh, how dreadful! I—ah!" she broke off, as some one turned the handle. "Oh, Herrick, here you are!"

Cecil, astonished at the strange reception she had given the proposal, turned and saw Charles Garston in the doorway.

Anthea recovered her self-possession, and turning to Cecil Arbuthnot, said:

"I always call my husband Herrick."

"Your husband!" exclaimed Arbuthnot.

Garston came forward, hand outheld.

"Yes, old man, and you are really one of the first to know it. Am I not in luck? Anthea and I were married last week, and she had to break the honeymoon to come and keep this engagement; to-morrow we're off to Norway for the summer."

Mechanically Cecil shook his hand, saying:

"Congratulations, Garston!"

A very faint color had crept up into the priest's pale face and at least one and a half inches was added to his height, as he bowed rigidly to Anthea.

"Good-night, then, Mrs. Garston; my errand was superfluous, and I regret that I have troubled you."

Bowing a second time, he left them.

"What's wrong?" demanded Garston, encircling Anthea with his arms.

She leaned against his shoulder, looking up into his handsome face and said tremulously:

"I couldn't stop him. He was proposing marriage."

"Poor chap! I say, Anthea, I am sorry—he is such a good sort, but I quite understand."

He stooped and kissed her eyes.

A strange expression swept across the woman's face, and she leaned passively against her husband's shoulder.

* * * * * * *

Cecil Arbuthnot walked home that night, although it took him a good two hours.

His face was as calm as ever, but inwardly the man was cold with anger and most deeply wounded.

He, Cecil Arbuthnot, whose honor had always been kept in a state of crystalline polish, had been allowed to propose to a married woman! That his love had been rejected meant a good deal to him, but of that he was not thinking; Anthea must have known what he wanted to say. He felt himself humiliated and degraded, and a deep bitter resentment sprang up within him.

He was conscious of this resentment, and knew that, according to his creed, he ought to smother and strangle it before it grew too strong. That it existed was due to Garston and to Anthea, and like nearly all men he was telling himself that it was the woman's fault. When he reached home he remembered that he must write to Sir Lewis to refuse or accept his invitation.

He stood in his cold chill room, holding a pen in his hand, for the answer must be written and posted that night.

He walked to the window. The world outside was quiet. A heavy-footed policeman passed, glancing up at the light in the window as he did so; a cart rolled in the distance; some one who looked like a demon rider, and sounded like one, sped past on a motor bicycle.

Arbuthnot went back to the table, then to the chair.

It was cold and he drew his Inverness round him and sat down.

On one side he saw a deanery, which meant a bishopric; a wife of whom he would be fond and with whom he would get on, great wealth, tremendous powers of well doing, and the whole of life on the lines on which he had always looked for it.

Against this, two strange eyes, and a voice—for these were all he knew of Anthea.

Could he in honor offer himself to Alys now?

The rectitude, the uncompromising stiffness of the morale of the clergyman, answered "No."

He did not parley with temptation, he wrote a courteously worded letter of regret to Alys, pleading the

impossibility of leaving his parish at that particular moment.

He went out and posted the letter and returned grim and stern.

He did not go to bed, but sat down in his chair once more. Before him Anthea's eyes seemed to dance and her voice seemed to fill the air. Though she was the wife of another man, Cecil could not forget.

Added to this was a deep and bitter resentment, an outraged sense of honor.

In fact, he had driven forth one demon, had garnished and cleared his rooms, and perhaps all unknown to himself, seven other demons were already seeking entrance, and the seven demons were fiercer than the first.

CHAPTER XII

For the evil, evil days
Will come on apace.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA GARSTON, famous singer, wealthy woman, envied wife of the greatest tenor the world had ever heard, sat reading her correspondence in her room.

She had been married five years.

She was perhaps rather thinner, the lines of her face were rather more set, but this was all. The copper-colored hair was as beautiful and as simply dressed as ever, the eyes as persistently half-closed, and the lower half of the face still contradicted the upper half.

She had attained everything—much more than she had ever dreamed of. Her career as a singer had been one long success: her husband's name and fame had been a powerful factor; and *not once* since her marriage had her voice failed her.

Charles, her husband, or as she always called him, Herrick, had almost forgotten that such a thing might be, or ever could happen, and she herself had placed it in the category of "the most unlikely."

It was a weakness outgrown. Anthea always took care of herself, and she had no children.

She was not disappointed, for she did not love little ones; she had been surrounded by unhappy children

in her own young days, and she knew that they add incalculably to the burden of life.

Her husband, if he thought differently, never spoke of it. It is true he seemed fond of little Herrick Sanders, their god-child, and he had insisted upon spending a few days at the farm each year. Anthea feared he would do so again this year, but it was only March as yet, and he always chose the early part of May.

As she sat turning over various papers, she heard Garston's step outside.

He came in quickly and lightly, and glanced for a moment at Anthea, who, however, did not raise her eyes. So he crossed to the fireplace, and leaning his back against the mantelpiece, faced her with his hands in his pockets. The shaded electric light fell on the man's face, and the years had aged *him* if not the woman. Gone was the slight expression of satisfaction which had marked it; he looked moody and not particularly happy, and various lines could be seen on the still smooth and young face.

"Well, Anthea," he said, abruptly.

"Yes, Herrick," she answered rather absently.

"I wonder if you remember that you have not seen me for three days," he said, bitterly.

She looked at him from beneath her eyelids.

"I was wondering," she said slowly, "if you had forgotten it yourself."

In an instant he was across the room and kissing her very fondly.

"I'm a brute, my darling," he said rather hoarsely, "but I thought you really weren't thinking of it."

"I might be forgiven, Herrick, I think," she answered, "when you think of what I have to do to-morrow."

"What is that?" he asked unthinkingly.

She drew herself away coldly, saying:

"Your memory is short to-night, and your interest in my career is never very keen."

"What an ass I am!" cried Garston, trying to draw her to him; "but I always think of you as my wife, you know, and not as the great singer whom every common Johnnie can pay to go and hear and see."

Anthea stood up, disengaging herself from her husband's arms, crossed to the piano, and began to turn over some music. Garston, seeing that he had made matters worse, sat down on the chair she had just left, and said shortly:

"It's our rest day, I know, but could you just try over one or two phrases of that duet we sing next week? I don't care for the tempo at one point, and I think we might improve it."

Anthea nodded, and a few minutes afterwards they were singing snatches of melody together, as if their souls were in perfect harmony.

But each was conscious of a jarring, Garston more so than Anthea. He was a man, and had always been successful; in his masculine egoism Anthea was his wife first and a singer secondly, and he would have been perfectly content if she had dropped the second vocation and had existed only in the former.

For Anthea was still a cold mystery to him, still different from any other woman; the spell of her strange

eyes, rarely seen by him after the first few weeks of their life together, still held him by its power.

She was so still, so cold, so completely occupied with her ambitions, so utterly bent upon perfecting perfection in her voice, so indifferent to all the things that, according to his creed as a man of the world, women should care for.

She never lost her temper, only very occasionally said bitter things, was always attentive to him, and ordered everything efficiently, always permitted him to kiss her and make love to her—and he felt that he knew her no better for the five years they had spent together than after the first few minutes of that advent of hers under the cherry blossoms.

Was he to blame?

Perhaps he was. They had almost reached the point of going their separate ways mentally; at least, Garston felt that he would soon have to give up attempting to walk by Anthea.

On this particular evening, however, he felt that he had been tactless to forget that on which all Anthea's soul had been set for many months.

A great International Society was holding its meeting in London that March—a society composed of the intellects of the world, great men and great women from every land, of every religion, of every shade of color, all bound together by the great free-masonry of brain.

The man who by his mighty powers had turned deserts into granaries, the woman who by the magic of her impersonations made men and women forget and

believe, the artist who caught the truth and held her up for nations to look upon, the poet, the financier who ruled states, the woman who governed men by right of her royal dower of womanhood, the man who knew the secrets of hearts, the dusky Seer from the East—these and many more were meeting in conclave, and out of a world choice they had selected Anthea Argent to sing to them.

Other great singers had been willing and eager, over eager, but she had been chosen, and she felt that her ambition was about to be fulfilled, her desire granted.

Her husband had, momentarily, forgotten this, and yet *he* had sung at their last conclave.

He played a few bars now of the song she was going to sing, and then, turning round rather abruptly, said:

"Anthea, when you sing to-morrow, do open your eyes and look straight ahead."

She smiled faintly.

"It's not a bit of good telling me to do that, Herrick. I have suffered so badly from taunts about my eyes that although I know you like them, I know and feel that they give other people a shock, and I simply can't get over the habit of hiding them."

"I wish you could," he said regretfully; "why, my wife, do you know that I still dream of them, and hardly ever see them?"

Anthea again smiled, but she did not do as nearly every other woman would have done had they heard the note of appeal in his voice. She did not raise her

lids: they seemed to droop more heavily than before, and Garston jumped up from the music stool with an impatient gesture.

"You had better go to bed early," he said; "you look perfectly fit, and your voice is divine."

"Do you really think so?" and Anthea turned to him with a quick movement of appeal.

"Think so—of course I do!" he answered roughly. "You are all voice, you know, and no heart."

"Herrick," she said suddenly, not hearing what he said, and as she looked at him the strange eyes filled with a sudden terror, "supposing my voice failed me."

He laughed.

"It was all a case of nerves and lack of nourishment: you are absolutely safe, my dear. Now go to bed and sleep; I never knew you nervous before."

"Did *you* ever know me anything, I wonder?" she asked, slowly. "I believe, Herrick, I know you better than you know me."

He eyed her gloomily. Oh, these jarring strings that never cease to jangle! How we will play upon them!

"Good-night," he said.

He went away; he did not kiss her; he was feeling all out of tune, as he had felt so many times lately.

Was his marriage a mistake?

Was it not better for two artists not to wed? Would he not have been happier with an ordinary wife? . . .

Alas, he had begun to ask himself these questions!

In certain moods he felt aggrieved. He had prac-

tically made her, had given her opportunity, and she seemed to have forgotten this!

Anthea barely noticed her husband's departure. She sat down at the piano and played very softly, and as she played the thought of her mother, and her own second purpose in life, began to occupy her mind. Her poor young mother whose grief-dimmed brown eyes had looked out so drearily on the world, the mother, who as a child, a girl, had loved so wildly and sang so divinely, but who had lost all with the losing of her voice!

Anthea ceased playing, and her lips grew grimmer as she thought of the man without whose sin *she* would not have *been*.

The man with the blue eyes, who had loved music and had cursed her, as it seemed, with his own cruel nature, and given her such strange eyes.

She went on playing, no longer softly, but harshly, in quick sharp spasms, and the music sounded cruel. It was an old long-forgotten folk song, that had burned itself into her memory, in which the betrayed woman is cursing the cruelty of her lover.

As Anthea played—she sang—for the man who was her father still lived: still clothed himself in soft raiment, still was received everywhere, and still therefore able to be cast down into the dust, still able to be made to suffer as he had made suffer the child-mother of the famous singer who never forgot.

Anthea rose from the piano, smiling rather unpleasantly at herself, and went towards her bedroom, which opened into her sitting-room.

Then suddenly she discovered that she could not find the handle; all the furniture of the room seemed to be receding into the distance, growing smaller and smaller, and she staggered against the jamb of the door.

It was over in an instant, and everything came back with a rush; but she recognized with a qualm of disgust that she had felt faint, and since she had never before experienced such a sensation, she was indignant with herself. It had been folly to think of the past, and to sing that old folk song; it had always upset her mother, and now it seemed it was too much for her—and promptly and wisely she went to bed, and slept exceedingly well.

CHAPTER XIII

Grief, my dear friend, has first my harp unstrung,
Withered my hand, and palsy struck my tongue.

—HERRICK.

PICTURE to yourself a great reception-room, capable of holding two thousand guests.

The walls are hung with paintings lent for the occasion, and each painting is the work of a master.

Statues and bronzes are placed here and there, and the floor is carpeted so thickly that the clumsiest feet are soundless. At one end, where the huge room becomes semi-circular in shape, is a small platform, and on the platform a grand piano.

The place is lighted, not too brilliantly, by electric light, and the air is fresh with the smell of spring. For the flowers that adorn the room are daffodils and primroses. The men and women move about and talk together gaily, finding it difficult occasionally to make themselves understood by one another, but there are interpreters, and handshakes and smiles go a long way.

They have talked and consulted together earlier in the week; now they all meet to learn something of one another.

There are many faces we should know; there are others almost unknown to the public and yet their

influence upon the future is such that without these lives the future would not be as it shall be. Some of these men and women are from the mysterious East, the birthplace of religions, from whose ancient lands comes the sound of footsteps ever pressing onward, and the tread of whose dusky feet has echoed down the ages.

The supreme moment of Anthea's life was at hand. She who worshiped power and intellect and genius was to delight the genius of the world. As the silent clock pointed to ten, Garston came across the room, and gave her his arm. Slowly they walked together, a very striking couple.

The man is in faultless evening dress, and wears certain decorations bestowed upon him by mighty rulers; the woman by him is dressed in pale wine-purple velvet, and wears rare amethysts of darker hue than her robe.

Anthea walked very evenly, but her husband saw in the quick comprehensive glance which he had given her as he offered his arm that her lips were lying very straightly one on the other, and that her marvelous magnetic eyes were well hidden by the white eyelids.

She looked strangely like a statue, he thought, as they walked slowly up the long room. How wonderful she was, this wife of his, with her voice of glory, and her cold still soul set in her unique personality!

Of what was she thinking as they walked together up the long room? Trying to answer this question, he recognized with a shock that he had not the vaguest notion. He stood back as she mounted the two steps.

She stood beside the piano waiting for him to take his seat, and sound the prelude to her triumph. Every face was turned towards the little platform. Eyes of every shade and color were looking at Anthea, from the cold bleak blue of the northern seer, to the still unsounded depth of black of the prophets of the race of the children of the sun. No sound came from the audience; they waited to hear a language which spoke to all of them in their own tongue, as did the cosmopolitan crowd after the feast of Pentecost.

Garston played the first few bars of the accompaniment. The song began with a long soft crooning cry, wonderfully compelling. Garston sat expectantly waiting to hear the weird music his wife had sung the previous evening.

But it never came.

He looked up at his wife, prolonging the prelude skilfully. He saw that a death-like hue had crept over her face, that her lips were rigid, and that her eyes were wide open, looking, as it seemed, into the depths of hell. . . .

The tall figure in the rich pale purple never moved; she stood as if transformed to marble.

He whispered sharply:

"Anthea!"

She spoke to him, and his keen ear heard the quality of her voice almost before the words were uttered.

"My voice is thin."

"Try, it will come back," and he played on.

"No, it is hopelessly gone."

Had Garston known his wife, he would not have

acted as he did; but not knowing her he did what he thought was best. It completely saved the situation, whatever else it lost. He spoke unhesitatingly, and with quick command, and Anthea, shattered and unhinged, obeyed unthinkingly.

"Play, and I will sing instead of you."

He rose. Anthea sat down and began to play mechanically. Garston offered no explanation to the audience.

Garston's voice took up the long crooning cry, Anthea mechanically transposing the music to suit him.

Low and sweet and full, the man's voice filled the room with melody, and over the faces of the listeners there crept a stillness that meant the music had appealed to them.

But for the first time, her husband's wonderful gift, instead of coming with healing power came with hideous pain to Anthea's ears; the music was not to her the voice of an angel; it was the savage triumph of a demon.

He was singing in her place! He was enchanting this wonderful collection of men and women when it should have been hers to do so.

At the supreme moment of her life the gods had struck, and Anthea within herself cursed her Creator, who had endowed her with a gift only to destroy it.

When the song was finished, Garston bowed. Anthea rose and bowed also. They stepped from the platform, and husband and wife passed down the room.

"Take me to the door," she whispered, and in silence he obeyed.

As they walked down the room, the men and women thanked him, or—a greater tribute—remained silent, still in the enchanted land to which he had led them.

Charles waited while the attendant fetched Anthea's cloak and furs.

"Shall I come?" he asked as he put her into the car.

"No."

The car moved away, and Garston stood bareheaded on the pavement.

He drew a deep breath and walked slowly back into the building.

He was obeying his wife, but it would have been better for both of them had he disobeyed her.

A member of the committee stepped up to him as he made his way back to the reception-room.

"I'm dreadfully sorry," explained Garston hurriedly, "but my wife's throat gave out suddenly, and there was nothing else to be done."

"No, no, I see there was not," said the other sympathetically; "please convey to your wife our sympathy, and tell her how disappointed we were."

Garston mingled once more with the great folk. But he never knew how that evening ended, or to whom he had spoken; he was vaguely conscious of exchanging remarks, of going from one to another, and being told how wonderfully his song had been sung (his song!), but it was all a nightmare, and he left as early as he could.

As his car drew up outside his home he became

aware, suddenly, that his hands were trembling, and that he was feeling sick and cold.

Anthea's maid met him in the hall. Her mistress had gone to bed, and did not wish to be disturbed.

Charles turned into the smoking-room, and lit a cigar. Poor Anthea! She cared so tremendously for this song! Well, he had saved the occasion, but—he remembered that as Anthea had stepped into her car she had raised her eyes and looked at him, and somehow ——

Hang it all, he would go to bed!

He went to his room, and tried the handle of the door which communicated with Anthea's. It was locked. This was nothing new, but he would have given much if only he could have gained access to her. But she made no sign, and he turned away impatiently, and, since he was tired, he fell asleep fairly soon.

CHAPTER XIV.

Where shall I go,
Or whither run,
To shun
This public overthrow?

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA heard her husband's touch upon the door, for she was standing in the middle of the room. She had dismissed her maid, and had since been walking up and down the floor.

She had replaced the pale purple dress with a loose dressing gown. Once she paused before her mirror and stood gazing at herself. She looked pale and haggard, and her strange eyes gazed back at her fiercely. Then she heard Garston turn the handle.

As she stood, a horrible nausea crept over her, and the walls seemed to melt away into the distance. She had barely strength to stagger to the bed, before the faintness completely overcame her. She flung herself down, darkness seemed to spring out of the light and seize her in its grasp, and she became unconscious.

The night passed in alternate intervals of dozing and faintness, and in the morning Anthea felt wretchedly ill.

She insisted, however, upon rising, and she made an appointment on the telephone with her voice specialist. Her husband she refused to see, sending word she was too shattered to receive any one.

Anthea was waiting until she had been to the doctor's. She herself thought, with Garston, that it was a case of nerves.

As she tried to eat a little breakfast in her room, she was conscious that her mind was a blank; one thing alone reared its sinister head every now and then—a bitter and unreasoning sense of injury against Herrick, to whom the gods had given everything. The mere thought of seeing his handsome face, wearing the slightly troubled expression that it had done of late, set all her nerves jarring; in her trouble, alas, she had no desire to seek consolation from the man who loved her, loved her very dearly even if in a rather selfish manner.

Several newspaper men and women were waiting outside to take snapshots of the famous singer as she stepped into her car; they had already secured Garston himself, and Anthea with her slow stately movements was even better game.

Her portrait filled dozens of little servant girls, hundreds of shop girls, and thousands of factory girls with envy.

It is a trying moment, that moment or hour waiting in the doctor's room. The room is either fearfully stuffy, or appallingly draughty, the paper one would prefer to read is being read by one's bitterest enemy—the patient who is just a few minutes ahead of one:

all the other papers are old ones; the light is bad, the comfortable chair is occupied, and, above all, the air is heavy with possible tragedy.

This man reading the paper so calmly, who is dressed with such scrupulous care, whose toilet is immaculate in every detail—this man in six months' time will be food for worms. He has come to the specialist as to a court of appeal, but there will be no remittance of the sentence.

This woman, heavy eyed and pale, whose eyes wander round the room, whose nervous agitation is palpable in the movements of her hands, has come to make an appointment for her only daughter. She wishes to see him first, for she knows deep within her terror-stricken heart that he can give them no comfort; it will mean another operation—for the hideous growth has come again.

Anthea, pale and still, arrived at the exact moment of her appointment, and she knew that she would not be kept waiting more than a few minutes; nor was she.

Within five minutes she was being ushered into the room, and the specialist came forward, bowing. He was a small red-haired man, with just a faint suspicion of the sidesman manner in church or chapel. A kindly man in the main, and one who was able to take all things into account, also a quick-tempered man; but only his hospital patients knew this.

He spoke with genuine sympathy.

"I was so sorry to receive your message, Mrs. Garston; I had hoped that this tiresome complaint of yours had worn itself out."

Anthea shook hands, but her lips did not smile, nor did she raise her eyelids.

"It is tiresome," she answered quietly; "it was a particularly important occasion also, and nothing has gone wrong for a good many years now."

"General health good?" inquired Dr. Dumfry, as he adjusted instruments and arranged the lights.

Anthea flung her furs on to the sofa, and sat down in the chair.

"Yes," she said, "perfectly good. Oh, I forgot. No, I felt rather queer and faint twice yesterday, and the day before, but then this song has worried me a good deal."

"Ah! no, that way, please, yes, a little wider. I wish all my patients were as obedient as you, Mrs. Garston, and as calm."

Anthea sat perfectly still, wondering if Dr. Dumfry knew that the blood was pulsing wildly through her veins, and that a great terror was upon her.

He finished his examination, said "Thank you" gravely, and stood looking rather thoughtfully out of the window.

"I find the chords in a slightly abnormal condition, Mrs. Garston, but there is absolutely nothing wrong that time will not put right; it may, in fact, be a matter of congratulation—but let me advise you to consult your family physician on this point. Rest will be the program."

He turned to her, smiling very pleasantly.

Of course, he knew of her family history, that is, of the essential point—her strange hereditary weakness,

and as he spoke he was thinking of this. Anthea was facing him; she had picked up her furs, and was just flinging them round her neck; as she did so, she lifted her eyelids and looked at him.

Dr. Dumfry started. Anthea made a strange gesture with her hands, and then in a second recovered her self-control and bowed.

"Thank you, of course I understand, and my doctor, Dr. Alice Hooker, will write to you."

Dr. Dumfry rang his bell and then walked towards the door by Anthea's side.

"Your voice will probably be better for a prolonged rest," he said, consolingly.

"Possibly," said Anthea in her coolest tones. "Again, thank you; you have been very kind."

The specialist returned to his room frowning, thinking to himself:

"It's a question whether artists should marry. Jove! what a start her eyes gave me! Queer affliction, or peculiar beauty, I really don't know which. Anyway, she won't sing for a year to come, now."

Anthea drove to Dr. Alice Hooker.

As she left half an hour afterwards, the doctor's hearty congratulations were ringing in her ears.

Charles was out to lunch; Anthea cancelled several engagements for the remainder of the day, and declared herself "not at home."

She dined alone, and then sat waiting in her room for her husband's return. He had telephoned from various places, and would be in about half-past nine.

She was dressed in a simple clinging gown of one of

her favorite shades of dull blue, for dull blue toned best with her copper-colored hair, and she was leaning back in an easy chair. The fire was burning dully, the lights were turned down, and the room was in semi-darkness.

Outside the streets were fairly quiet, and only an occasional shriek of machinery or yell of hooter, or rumble of wheels broke the half silence.

Anthea, her eyes widely open, her white long-fingered hands clasped upon her lap, was looking into the dully burning coals.

CHAPTER XV

Why dost thou wound and break my heart,
As if we should for ever part?

—HERRICK.

SHE heard the clock in the hall chime the half-hour after nine, and almost at the same instant her husband's step sounded outside.

He was going to his dressing-room.

Ten minutes passed, and then the door was opened, and he came in.

He felt nervous. He, the accomplished man of the world, and the greatly desired everywhere, quite frequently felt nervous in the presence of his wife. He stood a moment now at the door, and then came towards her rather slowly. But she did not turn; she still looked into the fire. The man noticed with his quick powers of observation that as he came across the room her eyelids fell.

"Well, my darling," he said as he stooped and kissed his wife's white forehead.

Anthea, despite all her control, shrank away ever so slightly, and Garston immediately straightened himself, and said in rather casual tones:

"I telephoned to Dr. Dumfry, but he was out and had left word that there was nothing wrong. It's just nerves, I suppose?"

"Dr. Dumfry advised me to go to my own doctor, and I did so."

A queer sort of shock passed through Garston; he had been lighting a cigarette, but his hand began to tremble, and he flung the cigarette into the fire, but he waited for her to go on.

"*You* will probably be glad to hear that Dr. Hooker congratulated me—and you! At last, Herrick, your wishes are to be gratified; I am going to have a child, and must not sing for at least a year."

Charles Garston stood absolutely still for a moment, the blood ebbing and flowing in his brain. He never thought what this news might mean to his wife: he forgot that her mother's voice had gone forever when her child came; he forgot, perhaps had never fully understood, that Anthea was not as many other women, and that her gift and her ambition were her whole life. He only remembered that at last his unspoken longing was to be fulfilled: at last, after all these years, he was to have a child.

He had been standing at a little distance, and now he stepped forward and knelt down by his wife, encircling her with his arms, and drawing her to him.

"My wife, my wife!" he said quickly in his lovely voice, made sweeter by his emotion; "at last! Ah, you cannot tell what this news of yours means to me. A link to bind us together, and then we can never drift apart! Oh, Anthea!"

Kneeling by her he looked up, and met the gaze of her uncanny eyes: scorn, horror, despair, many expressions, but none of hope and mother-love.

"You speak characteristically, Herrick," she said slowly, and leaning back so as to free herself from his arms; "it is undoubtedly good news to *you.*"

He shrank away, and a genuinely puzzled expression came into his face.

"But so it is to you, surely, Anthea, for you are a woman?"

She stood up suddenly, almost casting her husband from her, and her voice, although still "thin," was deep with passion and rebellion.

"A woman—yes, to my soul's tragedy. I am clothed in woman flesh, but all I care for is my voice; my voice and my success, and they are gone forever. The night that should have been my apotheosis was *yours.* I was disgraced before the world that matters, my dreams are broken, and my life is done. You who had conquered always and never known defeat cannot understand that if I had not been fool enough to marry I should also have triumphed. My mother lost her voice forever in that hideous hour of my birth, and so it will be when *your child* is born; but that will not matter to you, for I am only a woman, an adjunct of a man. But there, Herrick; let us drop the subject; *you* at least are satisfied."

The anger died out of her voice, leaving only coldness; the lids of her eyes were again lowered, and she moved wearily towards the fire.

Garston had risen to his feet when she repulsed him, and now he stood looking at her rather blankly.

"I say, Anthea, I'm awfully sorry you look at it like that."

"And are you not—as a musician, of course—sorry that my voice is sacrificed?" The cold mockery in Anthea's voice was indescribable.

He shifted his position, seeking for comfort to give his wife.

"Why, of course I am sorry; but it will come back again, I expect, and oh! Anthea, just supposing the child has a voice which holds the best of both of ours."

Anthea turned round sharply, and looked with wide open eyes at her husband—and then without another word walked slowly into her room and shut the door quietly behind her.

Garston, his hands in his pockets, stood looking moodily at the door; that firm quiet shut seemed pregnant with meaning.

He loved Anthea so very dearly. Of course, he admired and loved her voice, but it was Anthea he loved most of all, and his heart grew cold with sudden dread.

Suppose the coming child should prove a barrier rather than a link?

But no, that was impossible! Of course, the loss of her voice had been something of a shock to the poor girl; moreover, she was obviously not herself. Of course, if her real voice *never* came back, it would be a fearful loss. But there could be little doubt that it would. He had been clumsy and selfish, but then he had only had himself to think of for so many years; besides Anthea was always so coldly independent that it was not to be wondered at that he had got into the trick of self-worship.

He looked wistfully at his wife's door. The key clicked; she had locked it. With a shrug and a strange tightening of the muscles of his throat, he turned away and left the room.

Still, although he was genuinely sorry about Anthea's voice, he was conscious of a sense of satisfaction. She would be more at home, she would be more his wife; it would be more real, this strange marriage of his.

As soon as Anthea heard her husband leave the room she rang for her maid, and told her she would not require her any further.

Then, alone again, she locked the door, and began to pace the room.

Wild passion came and went within her mind. Was it for *this* she had striven and starved and finally conquered? Was she, after all, to be just an ordinary woman?

She stood before her mirror, and her strange eyes glittered as she looked into them. From her childhood upwards she had been a torture to herself, and as she gazed at herself she felt tragedy rising within her.

Her poor girl-mother, whom she knew only as the hack singer, what had she not suffered? She traced the sequence backwards. Ah well! she still had an object in life.

Then she turned away, and began again to walk up and down, up and down, all the demons of rebellion against nature and against nature's God, alive within her.

And in this manner Anthea, child of sorrow, began her journey on the steep and holy road that leads to maternity.

Charles had slept fairly well, but he woke in the morning with a sense of impending tragedy.

As he dressed he wondered if Anthea would come to breakfast. If she were not annoyed, she nearly always passed through his room on her way down-stairs, for she was always extremely punctual, never late, but never too soon, and the way through his room was nearer the breakfast room by almost half a minute.

He found himself listening with a sort of cold fear to her movements in the next room; her voice was just audible, speaking to her maid. Then the maid went out; in two minutes Anthea would go down-stairs.

He put down his brushes and strode towards the door that communicated with his wife's room. He would be hanged if he would allow her to make him feel such a fool; if she did not come to him, he would go to her. He turned the handle, but the door was locked, and he heard Anthea leave the room by the other door.

It was a little thing, but it is nearly always in little things that we get indications of the things that matter. Garston finished his dressing rapidly, with a deeply troubled mind.

He did not, for all his experience and knowledge, understand the position, chiefly because he did not understand his wife.

He went down-stairs quickly, and, opening the door,

found Anthea standing by the fire, awaiting his coming, exactly as she had always done.

"Good-morning, Herrick," she said, turning towards him, but making no step forward.

One second's hesitation on Garston's part, and then he came up to her, and kissed her tenderly.

"Good-morning, dearest," he said, gently, feeling with inexpressible pain that she released herself from his embrace almost before he had touched her.

She rang the bell, and breakfast was brought in.

She served him with her usual attentiveness.

Garston noted that she was rather pale, and that her eyelids were persistently lowered; but her copper-colored hair was dressed as perfectly as usual, and her whole personality was the same, excepting a certain added touch of coldness. He felt miserable.

They had hitherto always played each other's accompaniments when they were going over their songs privately, although of course each had a paid player for continual practice. This morning Garston had particularly wanted Anthea's assistance, and as he was evolving the matter in his mind she spoke in her usual tones.

"I'm afraid I can't play for you this morning, Herrick; my secretary comes at half-past ten, and I shall be very busy cancelling engagements."

"Sorry, dear, because no one plays like you, and I wanted you to help me arrange my continental tour."

"I'm afraid I'm too busy. Oh, and I have decided on my own arrangements, Herrick; I may as well tell you what they are."

He shot a quick look at her, but said nothing, waiting for her to go on.

"I shall stay here until June, I think, and then go away quietly into the country somewhere."

"Why not go to Cherry Blossom Farm?" he asked eagerly; "it is perfectly quiet there, if you want quiet, and I know Jim and his wife would be delighted to have you. Besides, I could be always running down."

Anthea lifted her eyebrows, and looked at him.

"No," she said, coldly, and her voice cut him like a whip. "I do not particularly care for the farm. The child also would be noisy, and there are other objections that perhaps you would not understand."

"As you like, Anthea," he answered, lighting a cigarette; "what you mean, I suppose, is that for the next year we are to go our own ways."

"The next year," she answered, rather softly.

"But don't you want me, dear?" he asked rather wistfully; "can't I help you? Won't you let me be with you as much as possible?"

But Anthea was beyond appeal, or at least beyond any appeal that Garston could make, and she said coldly:

"You are generally quicker to see my meaning, Herrick; it is so stupid to have to explain. It will be better for me to see as little as possible of you for the next summer and autumn."

"Anthea!"

"Better for me and better for you," she said coldly.

He stood up, his hand holding the back of the chair so tightly that the knuckles went white.

"What do you mean, Anthea?" he demanded; "what on earth have I done?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing, except that you sang when I failed, that you will sing while I am dumb, and that I have lost all I cared for, while you are delighted."

Garston paled, but he spoke with great restraint.

"Anthea, you know you are not spealling the truth: you know you are blaming me unfairly. I cannot help being a man, you know; but do exactly as you please, and I will help you in any way that I can."

"Thank you, Herrick." Once more Anthea was her cold self. "Then perhaps you will interview one or two people for me."

"Of course, dear. By Jove, I must be off!"

He hesitated a moment, but Anthea turned away, and bent over some letters. Her husband went out, and she was left alone.

CHAPTER XVI

In this world, the Isle of Dreams,
While we sit by sorrow's streams,
Tears and terrors are our themes.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA GARSTON loved music for its own delights, and all through the summer and autumn she indulged her desire.

She would sit listening with no change of the habitually cold expression on her lips, but never once through all these months did she go to hear her husband sing, and Garston's heart was heavy.

Had he lost the very little that he had ever had? She avoided him whenever she decently could, and there was about her a freezing atmosphere that warned him away.

But he looked forward to the coming of the child.

Surely when Anthea held her baby in her arms, her heart would melt!

In these months of waiting, almost as weary to the man as to the woman, Garston's voice steadily improved, and he won triumph after triumph.

Those very few who saw Anthea during this time, congratulated her upon the divine excellence of her husband's singing and condoled with her on her own enforced rest.

Then a day came in late November when Garston cancelled an important engagement and spent the hours in mental agony. London lay buried in a heavy fog, and Garston walked about his room and looked out of the window from time to time.

The very air of the room, well warmed as it was, was dimmed with the heavy atmosphere from outside, and the fire burned dully.

Would the silence never be broken by the crying for which he waited?

At last a decided tap at the door, and Dr. Alice Hooker came in.

She was of medium height, rather stout and very capable looking; she dressed a thought too elaborately perhaps, and she wore rather high heels to her thin shoes. As she came across the room, she arranged various rings on her fingers.

"Congratulations, Mr. Garston," she said, briskly; "your wife is doing capitally, and you have a daughter."

Garston drew a long breath, and a sunny, boyish smile lit up his face and eyes.

"I am glad! Thank you so much for letting me know at once. I've been waiting for the child's cry all the time, and the lack of it was becoming unbearable."

"Oh, she didn't cry much," said Dr. Hooker, giving him a quick glance; "she's a splendid little mortal, though, in every way."

"May I see Anthea?" Garston asked.

"I had rather you didn't to-night," said the doctor,

casually; "Mrs. Garston is asleep now, and it's very late. It struck one a few minutes ago."

"As you think best, of course," Garston answered gravely. "Perhaps you will tell the nurse to call me if my wife wishes later on."

"Yes, I'll do that," agreed the doctor; "good-night."

"Good-night, and thank you once more."

Garston opened the door for her.

"Don't come any further, please," commanded the doctor; "I am just going to run up-stairs again, and I'll let myself out; it will make less noise."

"Very well. Good-night."

He stood one moment watching her as she mounted the stairs, and then went back into the room.

A quarter of an hour later Dr. Alice Hooker came down-stairs again, and, after knocking very lightly, opened the door soundlessly.

Charles Garston, famous singer, happy father of a healthy first born, was sitting by the table, his face buried in his hands; she heard a quiet catching of his breath, and upon the polished surface of the table were several drops that reflected the electric light. Dr. Hooker shut the door silently, and went away; she had only been going to tell him that the nurse would call him if Anthea asked for him.

Her motor was waiting outside, and she was in a very thoughtful mood as she was driven home.

She had stooped over Anthea and had whispered:

"I am going to send your husband up, but he must only stay a few moments."

And Anthea had opened her eyes fully, and had made answer:

"Please do not let my husband come to see me to-night."

"Too tired—very well," she had answered cheerfully. "And now I'll show you the child; it is a girl, you know."

Anthea had closed her eyes, had barely looked at the child, and had made no attempt to touch it.

So the doctor was thoughtful. Of course, Mrs. Garston's behavior might be due to physical reaction; but the doctor did not like it. It would be such a pity if things were not smooth between the two; the famous tenor was so courtly and good-looking, and evidently very much in love with his wife.

Three days passed, and Anthea still refused to see her husband; moreover she had refused to feed her infant, and, of course, there could be no gainsaying her.

The nurse, a capable, commanding woman, attended Anthea with stately severity and with signs of disapproval. Dr. Alice Hooker said Anthea must be humored and obeyed for the present, and since the baby was doing well on warm milk it was all right, though, of course, a pity. But the nurse knew better. It was temper—that was what was wrong with Mrs. Garston. The nurse had no patience with her, and for two pins she would tell her so.

Anthea lay silently brooding, and her soul was in darkness.

On the fourth morning, as it was warm and sunny,

the baby was taken for a walk by the disapproving nurse; since Anthea was not feeding her child, of course, the infant was very little with her. She lay quietly thinking, she was making up her mind. She must, of course, see her husband: appearances must be kept up. She did not want to see him, but there was no conceivable reason why she should not.

She touched the bell.

A nurse stood by her almost instantaneously.

"Is Nurse Malcolm in?" asked Anthea.

"She has just come in, madam," was the answer of the second nurse.

"Would you kindly see if Mr. Garston is disengaged, and, if so, ask him if he will come and see me?"

Anthea's voice was formal, and her eyes were nearly closed.

"Certainly, madam."

The nurse went on her errand. She found Nurse Malcolm in the dining-room with Garston and the baby.

Garston was holding his little daughter in his arms, and wondering at the thrill the mere sensation gave him. Fatherly love had sprung into being the first time he had seen his child, and he was already wise in the ways of holding it.

"She is a very fine child really, nurse," he said solemnly and with entire belief in the statement.

"Yes, sir," answered the nurse sedately; "she is absolutely sound in every way."

"Yes, and she doesn't cry much."

He looked down on the child with an expression

which would have amused many of the ignorant and worldly friends of the famous tenor.

"No," said the nurse, "she doesn't, and it's a good thing, for her voice is the least pretty part of her. But I think she likes music already; a barrel organ was playing as I came in; she was about to cry, but when she heard it she stopped."

Garston laughed.

"Good Lord, nurse; you alarm me. If she likes that awful noise that was going on outside, it doesn't say much for her musical ear, but I don't care much about that," he said half to himself, stooping over his child and kissing it.

"Mrs. Garston is asking for you, sir, if you are disengaged," said the second nurse. Both the nurses saw a tenseness come into the man's face and figure as he answered quickly:

"All right; I will go up at once. Take baby, nurse."

Very slowly Charles went up the stairs. His wife's refusal to see him had hurt him deeply, but he had consoled himself with the words, "illness, nerves, shock," and perhaps she did not wish him to see her until she felt normal again. For although Anthea did not appear vain, still she was always very particular in all details of appearance, and always wore the garment which suited herself, not that which suited other women, as do most ladies of fashion.

But he knew, alas! that she had not wanted him, that in pain and weariness she had not turned to him, that *he* was not her consoler: not the lover whose very touch takes bitterness from agony. This knowl-

edge was a heavy burden, and caused him to tread softly both mentally and physically.

He opened the door and came round the screen.

Anthea was lying watching, as it seemed, with half-closed eyes.

Her hair lay loosely round her on the snow-white pillow; her lips were closed rather stiffly, but a very faint tinge of color came into her cheeks as Garston came across the floor, and the stiff lips smiled conventionally.

"Good-morning, Herrick," she said quietly.

Garston leaned over her and kissed her on the mouth with sad tenderness.

She did not return his kiss, and her husband felt that she barely restrained a shudder.

"How are you feeling, Anthea?" he asked, still keeping hold of her hand, although he could feel reluctance in it.

"Fairly well, thank you." She moved restlessly.

"I will not stay with you long to-day," he said, wistfully; "you are tired, I see; but, Anthea, you don't *know* how I have wanted to see you the last four days."

Anthea opened her eyes for one quick second, and then lowered the lids again, saying with cold weariness:

"I was not feeling myself, and nurse tells me you have seen the baby?"

"Yes." His voice shook for a moment. "Yes, but she is not you. Oh, my cold, strange wife, what shall we call her—this child of ours, love of our love and flesh of our flesh?"

Anthea made an effort to be interested.

"What do you think, Herrick, what would you like?"

Charles held her thin long hand in one of his and stroked it gently, and a dreadful impulse came upon Anthea to shriek and draw her hand away, but with an effort she controlled it, and only the muscles of her face twitched a little.

Her husband spoke reverently, and with deep tenderness, although he used no terms of endearment. Anthea *was* Anthea, and loving terms seemed out of place.

"Anthea, I first saw you in the Land of Cherry Isle, and since the cherry trees have given us this blossom let us call our daughter Julia."

"If you like, Herrick," came the answer with gentle indifference.

Her husband went on quietly, feeling impelled to speak:

"And, Anthea, if your voice has gone for ever (I do not believe it has, but I know you are always thinking of it), perhaps our child will sing, perhaps Herrick's dainty verse will be true of her:

So smooth, so sweet, so silv'ry is thy voice
As could they hear the damned would make no noise
But listen to thee, walking in thy chamber
Melting melodious words to lutes of amber.

And so, Anthea, even if your voice is gone, it will make little difference, for it will sound again in your child."

With a steady movement she drew her hand out of her husband's.

"I am afraid you must go now," she said very quietly, and the words came slowly; "I am tired."

"Very well, Anthea. I miss my attentive wife, as well as my Anthea."

He did not kiss her, for he saw that something was hopelessly wrong between them, but stood a moment looking down with a rather pathetic wistfulness, and then he went away.

At the door he met Nurse Malcolm bringing the baby to pay a duty call upon its mother.

He took his little daughter lovingly, and kissed her, and then turned towards his wife.

Anthea's eyes were open, and she was watching the little group, but in her strange eyes there was no love or pride, no wifely satisfaction, no motherly delight; only a cold repugnance, a wild bitterness.

He left the room, dull terror again weighing down his heart.

CHAPTER XVII

Here, a little child, I stand.
—HERRICK.

THE baby Julia sat on a rug before the nursery fire; nurse was in the next room, and the door was open, so Baby Julia was not far from a watchful eye.

And, besides, there was a nasty tall guard before the fire, all crisscrossed with wire, and if her littlest finger went through it stuck and hurt. When it hurt Baby Julia *knew* it would *never* come out again, and she would have to spend the rest of her days attached to a nursery guard.

So she didn't put her fingers into the little holes, though they did fit so beautifully, but contented herself with drawing dolly's head across the bars; it made such a pretty noise, a low soft note, and she loved pretty noises. She loved that lovely big thing with legs down-stairs that cried so beautifully when you hit it.

Baby Julia loved all sorts of things: she loved nursie, the woman slave who waited on her, but she was a little afraid of the tall grave woman who nursie said was mother. She loved supremely the man who nursed her and kissed her, who nurse said was daddy, and out of whose mouth came such pretty noises.

Baby Julia couldn't talk yet; she was only just two years old. Nursie called her backward, but, of course,

she understood all the things that people said. She did so want daddy to come up now, perhaps he wouldn't—and her lips went down, but she didn't cry. Baby Julia couldn't think why such ugly noises came from her mouth when she cried, it was dreadful; it hurt her head it was so ugly, and so she hardly ever cried.

She had nice teeth, too, dainty little pearly teeth, and such a red tongue; she had looked at it that morning, and it had moved.

She sat before the fireplace on the fluffy white rug, making musical noises on the guard; she was very cunning at this game, and was able to get music from all sorts of queer things. Her hair was curly, nursie said it was a mop; but daddy had kissed it, and said it was her mother's hair. Her mouth was red like her tongue, her cheeks rosy, and her eyes very blue beneath their long curling lashes; her eyebrows—those funny smudges of black which wouldn't wash off—very finely marked, and her nose an altogether kissable one.

In fact she was very lovely, lovely and dimpled, and red and white, and dear, and sweet, and warm, and she had lots of names.

Mother, who nearly always shut her eyes, called her Julia, and nothing else. Baby wished she wouldn't shut her eyes. Once when daddy's voice had sounded, singing to himself, and mother had been with her, she had opened her eyes wide, and they had looked different and funny, and she loved funny things.

Nursie called her Miss Jue, or Baby Girl, and when she put her arms round daddy's neck and loved him

tight he called her "My little poem." Once when he looked as if he were going to cry, he had called her "My Cherry Blossom."

Daddy was the delight of her soul; he always understood, and he would say to her:

"Sing to daddy, Little Poem."

But Baby Julia always shook her head, and daddy looked sad and worried again.

Once mother had said something about doctors when she had been crying, but all the color had gone from daddy's face, and he had looked like her dolly when she had scrubbed the pink off, and he had said:

"For God's sake, no; wait. If I had two dead voices on my soul, I should go mad."

Mother had said nothing.

This was baby's view and review of her life, and on the whole she was a happy little mortal, for she was dearly loved by her nurse, and every bodily want of the child was satisfied.

Anthea had, in all particulars of this kind, been a model mother; the baby's life was conducted on strictly modern hygienic principles.

Mother was now coming slowly up-stairs—very slowly and with a step older than her years.

Anthea had made unto herself a graven image, and when it had been cast down from its high place, her altar had been left bare, and she had turned away, and had knelt no more. And since it is better to worship false gods than none at all, Anthea had found her life a weariness.

She could no longer be happy; she was only capable

of being hurt, and her husband seemed to her to be a scourge in the hand of her sad destiny.

All he said seemed to her to be charged with double meaning, and the child which should have bound them seemed doomed to hold them apart.

And yet she had health and wealth and her own weird beauty, a home, a husband and a child, and a position in the past as a singer.

She paused a moment at the nursery door—paused to listen: was Herrick within singing to the child? Ah! he could sing to Julia, while she herself was forever dumb. The handle turned with a quick click in Anthea's long white fingers.

The baby turned round instantly—she was extraordinarily sensitive to sounds and painfully easily startled—and scrambled to her feet, holding on to the guard with one sweet dimpled hand. But there was no tottering rush across the floor, no chuckling laughter, or shrill delight; the baby's eyelids fell in unconscious imitation of her mother, and she stood quite still.

Anthea came across the floor and stood looking down at her baby, and then she stooped and gravely kissed the little brow which the child lifted to her as if in custom. Alas for Anthea that the rosebud lips were not offered.

"Well, Julia," and at the sound of the mother's unmusical voice, the nurse appeared at the door.

"Good-morning, nurse," said Anthea, straightening herself and glancing towards the pleasant-looking woman, who answered quickly:

"Good-morning, ma'am."

"Has Miss Julia been quite well?" went on Anthea.

"Yes, thank you, ma'am," answered the nurse.

"I am going to stay with her for an hour or so, so you can do what you like," said Anthea.

"Thank you, ma'am. I have one or two little things to do in the next room, and down-stairs. Miss Jue should have some warmer vests, and I was just looking through her clothes."

"Very well; I will call you when I want to go away."

Nurse went back into the inner room, and pulled a drawer open with a jerk.

"I can't stand Mrs. Garston," she muttered to herself; "she's a walkin' corpse, and yet she's got the kindest husband and the dearest love of a baby. Her voice always goes down my spine like a trickle of cold water, or a door key when your nose is bleeding; she does everything as if she were *paid* for it."

Anthea did not move from her position by the fireplace, but just stood there looking down at the baby, who with great gravity stood still. Anthea crossed the room to the window, and sat down in an armchair. The baby glanced at her for a moment, and then turned to the guard, and, squatting down on the rug, began once more to make the pretty noises with dolly's head against the brass.

The mother did not want the child, nor did the child want the mother, and they sat in the beautiful nursery regardless of each other. Anthea watched her baby,

absently listening to the musical notes she obtained from her crude instrument, but her thoughts were far away, and the baby had forgotten her.

Then Baby Julia stopped and half turned her head. She was listening.

Anthea, too, caught the sound.

It was the sound of her husband's step.

She looked towards the door for a moment, and then back to the child.

Baby Julia had scrambled to her feet, her face was scarlet with delight, her blue eyes were sparkling, and she began to dance a queer little jig. Her whole being was alive and alight with vividest joy; but she danced on the rug, she did not run to the door. She was evidently waiting for something; there was a program to be carried out; and baby had her part to play.

As Anthea watched the change in the child, saw joy and life spring into being in the little face, a strange new sensation was born deep within her. She did not know, she did not recognize it, but it was the first birth pang of a mother's soul, the first pang of a long and weary travail.

Anthea's eyes were widely open, and this would have pleased the baby—but Julia was watching the door. Then outside the door the steps paused, and Charles Garston began to sing very softly:

Pray, Mrs. Mouse, are you within?

Then Garston opened the door, and dropped on his knees. A wild tottering scramble: the baby was still

too young to run steadily and fast: and Julia was across the room, her short arms clinging round his neck, her whole being intoxicated with greatest joy. Garston rose to his feet, holding the child to him, and came into the room and shut the door—and then he saw his wife.

He held the child to him for a moment; then, putting her down, he came across the room to Anthea.

"Good-morning, Anthea."

He leaned forward as if to kiss her.

But Anthea moved her chair slightly, and he straightened himself instantly.

"Good-morning, Herrick," she answered, and then added with just a suspicion of sarcasm in the thin voice:

"Julia seems to know the performance which I have just witnessed?"

Garston stepped back to the fireplace, and stood looking down at his boots in moody silence. His wife gazed at him with cold criticism. All the happiness had gone from him; he was thinner, there were lines of pain upon his face, and the face was sad when in repose and rather bitter.

His hair was turning white at the temples, and he looked much older than his thirty and odd years.

He did not answer her question, and the baby stood between them, glancing first at one and then at the other of her parents.

Then Anthea spoke again with elaborate politeness.

"Please do not let me stop you from your game

with Julia; I know how she looks forward to seeing you."

The contrast between the manner of Julia's reception of her parents had cut with keenness into Anthea's heart.

Garston heard the thin voice, the voice once so glorious, and his own pain was dulled.

"Anthea, you quite misunderstood me the other day; I was intending no reproach to you."

"Indeed, Herrick, I believe you," she said, with gentle bitterness; "it was foolish of me to be hurt and to go away, but please say no more."

"Very well."

There was a world of patience in the singer's supple voice.

His wife gave him one quick glance, but he did not see it; he was looking at his child.

Herrick never saw *why* he had hurt her, and when she was hurt, she always hurt back again now.

Through him she had gained her fame, and through him she had lost it again. It was a pity that she never spoke her own thoughts, for Charles, so quick to feel, would have understood very thoroughly had she given him the key.

The baby now began to pull impatiently at one of his hands, and Garston once more gathered the child to him; but this was not what baby wanted, and she pulled his mouth open with her dimpled fingers.

"Presently, Little Poem, presently," he murmured, holding her rounded cheek to his.

Anthea watched in silence, and then said quietly:

"My dear Herrick, you might oblige the child; if I am in your way, I will go."

He gave her one look difficult to interpret, but answered casually:

"Baby must learn patience."

"You mean you do not wish to sing before me."

She rose calmly.

"It is a pity to disappoint the child if *she* cares for your singing. I shall be in to lunch, Herrick."

With her slow measured step she left the room.

Once outside and the door closed, she leaned against the wall and waited.

She could hear her husband's voice saying lovingly:

"Wait a minute, Little Poem, and you shall hear daddy."

Anthea knew he was giving her time to be out of reach of the sound of his singing.

She had not heard her husband sing for more than two years, and a sudden desire, overwhelming in its intensity, sprang up within her for the music of his voice.

She waited, leaning her head against the wall, her eyes wide open and gazing blankly into space.

As she waited she thought.

She had never really loved her husband, not loved him as she had loved her own voice and her all-absorbing ambition; but as she waited for his voice to break the silence, a sudden knowledge of his patient goodness to her revealed itself in her mind.

He, the world-famed man, because of his love for her and his pity, had yielded to her in every detail, and

she contrasted the memory of the debonair young man kneeling by her in the cherry orchard years ago with the saddened father kneeling by his child.

For almost the first time in her life emotion of a human kind seemed to be running within her, and the cold frozen heart of the woman felt a thrill of tenderness quiver through her being.

Then, soft and low and sweet, her husband's voice floated to her.

As he sang, her artist's soul read the meaning of his song, heard the burden of his despair, for the song he sang to his child was the song which had first bound them together:

Cherry ripe, ripe, ripe I cry,
Full and fair ones, come and buy—
If so be you ask me where
They do grow? I answer, There
Where my Julia's lips do smile,
There's the land or Cherry Isle,
Whose plantations fully show
All the year where cherries grow.

Silence in the nursery, no sweet laughter, the laughter of delight that bursts spontaneously from children's lips, but a queer harsh, inarticulate sound, and then Herrick's voice in passionate compassion.

"Don't try, my Little Blossom; my white Cherry Blossom, never mind. Daddy will kiss the ears and make them better. Little lamb can't help the ugly noise; daddy will sing for her." He kissed his child and held her to him; then his voice sounded again, and it was wrung with pain. He was speaking to himself:

"God have mercy upon me! Has your mother's curse come down upon you, my little innocent child?"

A quick catch sounded in his breath, and a quiver broke the words.

Anthea, listening outside, turned deadly white, and all the tenderness died away within her before it had come to birth.

It was for the child that Herrick cared. She had lost her voice that the child might be, and the curse was upon the child. Should she enter the nursery?

She hesitated a moment, and then her husband's voice sounded again, singing a crooning Irish melody.

No, she had no part in them—and Anthea went up-stairs.

When she came down to lunch her expression was colder even than usual, and her voice more dead.

Garston did not speak, and ate but little. At the end of the meal, just as Anthea was rising, he suddenly signed to her to remain.

"One moment, Anthea, please. I wish to tell you something."

Anthea stood, half-turned away, one hand on her chair, waiting with cold politeness for him to speak.

"Since it is about our child, it may not interest you," he went on, with suppressed bitterness. "I intend to call in Dr. Dumfry to examine her throat."

"Your tone is hardly justifiable, Herrick," said Anthea, turning her face towards him, her whole manner repellent; "for, if you remember, it was I who suggested this course of action."

"Yes, you did; you have looked after the child's

physical well-being *since* her birth, oh! I do not deny that," he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

"Do you wish to make the arrangements, or shall I?" Anthea spoke indifferently now.

"Oh! I won't trouble you; I will see to them," and Garston pushed his chair back from the table.

"Very well then, I leave it in your hands, and since Julia is always amenable with you, and not always with me, I will leave you and nurse to take her. Come, Herrick, you cannot say that I am not doing what you want."

"Anthea!" Garston sprang to his feet, and the chair fell with a crash. "You will drive me mad: you are a frozen icicle; do you care for nothing but yourself? Have you never a woman's feeling for others?"

"You are violent, Herrick"—a strange dead scorn sounded in Anthea's voice—"you appear to have enough feeling for both of us. I shall be genuinely shocked if anything should prove to be radically and incurably wrong with Julia's voice, but, surely," and her tone grew hideously mocking and bitter, "but surely it would not greatly matter if her voice was ugly. She will only be a woman, after all."

Garston strode up to his wife, his eyes blazing with wrath.

"How dare you, Anthea?" he said sternly; "how dare you speak like that? Are you a woman, and my wife?"

She stepped back and looked him fully in the face, her strange eyes gleaming with passion.

"To my own undoing, I am both, Herrick."

CHAPTER XVIII

How rich and pleasing thou, my Julia, art
In each thy dainty and peculiar part!

—HERRICK.

THE reporter turned pale with disappointment.

"There," he exclaimed to a friend, "Garston's gone and got into the car with his baby and nurse, and I've missed him."

"Well, stay where you are, and catch him as he comes back; a famous picture it will make."

"Hope he won't be long," said the first reporter, wearily; "lucky dog to have a car like that, and a pretty kiddie, and all made out of his voice."

Garston was *not* long.

"Nurse," he said, taking his child from the arms of the somewhat frightened-looking woman, "I will go in with Miss Julia, and perhaps take her straight home in the car afterwards. You can come back in a taxi."

"Very well, sir. Oh! I do hope she will be all right," and tears sprang to the woman's eyes.

Garston saw them, and his voice was very kindly as he answered:

"I am afraid we must not hope too much, nurse. Mrs. Garston has wished Miss Julia to see the specialist for some time. She will be good with me, I think."

"I am sure she will, sir, and you know she hates crying," said the nurse soberly.

Garston held his child closely to him, whispering sweet nonsense into the dainty ear, and Baby Julia was quite happy. Was she not with daddy? Her solemn baby eyes gazed searchingly everywhere, always coming back to the weary face of her father.

A short wait only, and then the footman entered.

"This way, please, sir; Dr. Dumfry is quite ready."

"How do you do, Mr. Garston? I am sorry to see you here on such an errand. Mrs. Garston quite well?"

Dr. Dumfry shook hands with the singer only, taking no notice of the child.

"Yes, thank you," answered Garston gravely; "but we thought it better for my wife not to come."

"Undoubtedly, undoubtedly," answered the specialist, arranging lights as he spoke; "and now how will the little one prefer to sit?"

"On my lap," answered Garston. "I wrote to you about all the symptoms, the dislike of hearing herself cry, and the strange uncouth noises she seems only able to make. But I think I forgot to tell you that she has a wonderful love of music."

"Ah, yes! Of course, it would be too painful for Mrs. Garston to come. Now, Mr. Garston, will you please tell the child to open her mouth and look this way?"

"Now, Little Poem," said the singer gravely, "open your mouth wide; the doctor is going to look right down into you."

Baby Julia shook her head; she had not long finished a lovely sweet; perhaps the nasty man would want to have it when he saw it. So she closed her lips firmly.

"I shall have to make her cry, I'm afraid," said the doctor.

"No, no," said Garston, quickly. "There's a better way. Now, Little Poem, daddy will sing to you if you will do exactly as the man says."

Baby Julia nodded her head with dizzy rapidity, and pulled at Garston's lips, opening her own little rosebud mouth widely.

Dr. Dumfry gave one quick glance at the famous singer, and then, taking no further notice of him, began his examination.

The baby seemed to forget him and her fears, and she listened entranced to her father's voice.

He sang George Macdonald's perfect song to a setting of his own which was a particular favorite of the baby's:

Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here.
Where did you get those eyes of blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.

"A little to the side, please, Mr. Garston. Ah! that's fine; I shall not be long now."

A sudden tremble in Garston's voice:

Where did you get that tiny tear?
I found it waiting when I came here.
Where did you get those tiny hands?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.

"Two more minutes. No, I shall not hurt her; but I must have this mirror right. She is very good."

Big tears stood in Baby Julia's blue eyes, big tears all ready to fall; but if she cried daddy would stop singing, and she *might* make an ugly noise. So her hot baby hands clung tightly to her father's as his voice rang out again:

And how did it all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.
And why did you come to us, you dear?
God thought about you, and so I am here.

"Thank you, that will do nicely."

Garston ceased singing, and Baby Julia's lips went down. The nasty man had hurt her, and put all sorts of things down her throat, and now daddy had left off. Before she could stop herself, she began to cry, in harsh uncouth noises. She ceased almost as soon as she had begun, however, and just sat on her father's lap, trembling all over, the big tears falling down her grief-stricken face.

"There, there, Little Poem; it's all over. You've been such a brave girl. Well, doctor?"

Garston, fondling his child and wiping her eyes with his immaculate handkerchief, looked up drearily at the specialist. Dr. Dumfry was polishing his spectacles, and he did not answer at first.

Garston rose to his feet, and put his baby down in the chair, saying:

"Little Poem, sit still while I speak to the man."

He walked to the further side of the room, and the doctor followed him.

"Now, Dr. Dumfry, tell me, please."

"The vocal chords are merely rudimentary."

"And she will never speak?" The question came slowly.

"I fear not; it is practically impossible for them to grow now. I am surprised she can make as much noise as she does."

Garston shuddered.

"And the cause?" he demanded.

Dr. Dumfry's manner became strictly professional and non-committal.

"Quite impossible to say, my dear sir. There is serious hereditary weakness in Mrs. Garston's voice. That is all I can say."

"Thank you. That is all, then?"

"Oh, we will have another look presently; but in the meantime give the child every means of growth—fresh air, plenty of nourishing food, and so on. Her remarkable love of music must be carefully watched, and not over-indulged. But I shall be passing your house later. After you have seen Mrs. Garston, I will come and speak to her. I always like to give my advice straight to the mother."

"Thank you, it's very good of you. Mrs. Garston understands all technicalities of expression as regards the voice, and will be able to comprehend everything better than I."

"Shall I send for the nurse?" asked Dr. Dumfry, his hand on the bell.

"No, I will take my child home. I would rather be alone." He held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said simply. And the famous singer, carrying his child, went out of the consulting room into the hall.

"Home," he said.

The indefatigable reporter was able to catch him as he got out of the car, and the next day a picture of Garston carrying his child appeared in the *Looking Glass* and delighted the souls of the great British public. It was labeled:

A Famous Singer and Happy Father
Mr. Garston and Miss Julia Garston

CHAPTER XIX

So smooth, so sweet, so silv'ry is the voice
As, could they hear, the damned would make no noise.
—HERRICK.

ANTHEA had gone to her room, very deeply annoyed with herself. She had provoked a scene, and she hated scenes; she had been roused from her coldness to a more than usually bitter retort, and the passion coming after the momentary softening of the morning had left a savage pain within her.

And then she was overwhelmingly anxious about the child's voice.

For many months now she had been practically certain that there was something radically wrong with Julia, but she had half shrunk from certainty.

She had not only lost her own voice, but the loss had been doubled in that she had bequeathed dumbness to her child.

Pride of woman, although she did not recognize it, was wounded surely within—and there was something else, although the days were to be many before she would own it even to herself.

To what extent was she responsible? Her revolt against the coming of the child, as far as it had meant the loss of her voice, was still seething within her; she

remembered the weeks of passion, of despair, of nausea, of rebellion, all the more terrible because hidden away from the outer world. And the child would never speak; of this she felt practically certain.

She was sitting in her own room, her eyes wide open gazing unseeingly at the leaping fire.

Outside the day was a clear still autumn one.

She was "not at home," and feared no interruption, but she was waiting for the sound of her husband's tread outside and his punctilious knock at the door.

Four o'clock chimed from the outside world, and Anthea was seized with restlessness.

She began to pace the room, moving with a quickness wholly foreign to her usual walk; a great uneasiness, physical, mental and moral was upon her.

In her pacings she passed her piano, and, impelled by a sudden impulse, sat down to play.

She played snatches of strange music, wild inarticulate pleadings from Grieg, weird Hungarian melodies and Polish harmonies, passing from one to the other in skilful modulations, the whole sounding a phantasy of music. Then, some strange external unseen influence guiding her fingers, the music became the crooning Irish ballad that Herrick had sung instead of her, on that night of horror—the night of her great failure.

Low and intense the unearthly crooning notes from the piano rose and fell, conjured out of mechanism by her skilful fingers.

Her thoughts went back again to that night, to that awful moment when she actually felt her voice going.

And even as she had felt the dying of the wondrous voice, so now she felt its re-birth.

She began to sing.

Once again it was hers, and the voice that had filled the world with delight rose and fell in the empty room.

The long crooning was perfect, now wailing, now filling the air with triumph, now with pain. The passion of her voice was deeper than it had ever been.

The doors of her room were double and heavy with curtains, as were Garston's, so that the two singers should be inaudible to one another when they so desired it, and none of the household heard Anthea's wild triumph.

Her husband was in his room, doors shut and curtained; he was sitting in a chair by the fire, leaning forward with his face hidden in his hands. Baby Julia was being rocked and comforted by a weeping nurse in the pretty nursery, and her mother was singing, forgetful of everything, in her room.

The music ceased, and Anthea sat still, stunned by the suddenness of her recovery.

Then she rose and rang the bell, with a quick imperative hand.

"The car at once, please," she commanded.

In a few minutes she was ready, and leaving word that she would return presently, she gave the order:

"Dr. Dumfry, Harley Street."

It had filtered through the house that something was wrong with Miss Julia, and every one supposed that Mrs. Garston had gone to Harley Street for further information. The footman told a maid, and the maid

told the nurse, and it was the general opinion that it was no more than she ought to have done.

Anthea had no appointment, yet she was at once admitted to the consulting room. Dr. Dumfry came forward rather hurriedly, saying: "I was coming round myself in a few minutes, Mrs. Garston; I am sorry you had this trouble."

Anthea hardly heard his words, and spoke at once:

"Dr. Dumfry, my voice has come back. I wish you to examine my throat instantly."

"Certainly; I congratulate you most sincerely." And the doctor set about his business.

The minutes passed.

"Well?" said Anthea, and she heard the difference in her own voice, for that awful dead thinness had gone.

"Your throat is absolutely normal," the specialist said, gravely; "the weakness appears to have entirely vanished."

"And you think I may sing again?"

Anthea's strange eyes were wide open, and full of life and hope; everything but her regained gift was forgotten.

"I see no reason whatever why you should not," was the answer; "the slight abnormality seems to have become absorbed, and the chords are in an entirely healthy condition. Have you seen Mr. Garston?"

"No," returned Anthea, still oblivious of the doctor's gravity.

"Ah, then, I shall be in if you want to ring me up. You would doubtless prefer to see your husband first."

"Yes, I think so."

In a few minutes Anthea was being driven homewards.

"Extraordinary coincidence," thought Dumfry to himself; "the mother regains her voice on the very day I have to say the child has none. She appears to know nothing about that. Still, if she has her own voice I doubt if she will care about the child's."

Anthea went straight to her room, and rang for her maid, but the maid came up with a message from Herrick: he wanted to speak to her; would she come to his room, or should he come to hers?

And then Anthea remembered her child.

"I will come to Mr. Garston," she said, "and will be with him in a few minutes."

And then, throwing off her furs, by a tremendous effort she assumed her ordinary cold calm demeanor and went down-stairs to Garston's own study.

Garston had delayed sending for his wife for two reasons.

He was afraid of himself and of her.

He felt that their mutual lives had come almost to breaking point, that her love for him was, if it had ever been there—which he now doubted—dead beyond all hope of resurrection.

His own love was there, would be there for always, but it was badly wounded, and had shrunk back into itself. Just at present his love for his child was supreme to him, and he feared that he would reproach the mother.

And then—would the mother care?

If she received his terrible news with her usual cold indifference, her polite attention, he felt that he would come perilously near to violence.

She had never loved the child, for the child had deprived her of her voice. But he did not pretend to understand his wife; she was more of a stranger to him now than she had been when he first gazed into her mystic eyes. With a groan he rose to his feet, and, ringing his bell, sent his message to his wife.

Her slow, even step sounded outside, and she came into the room in her own usual dignified manner; there was a slight flush in her pale cheeks, her hair seemed to glow with a richer sheen than it had had for some time, the white eyelids were lowered; her resemblance to a statue, a statue slightly tinted flesh color, struck her husband—not for the first time.

"Marble made and marble-hearted": the phrase suddenly recurred to him.

Anthea came across the room and faced him; he was leaning against the mantelpiece, his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

Each waited for the other to speak.

The silence was becoming painful to both of them, and Anthea, perceiving this, spoke first, although she had determined to let Herrick speak as he chose, for she had no doubt whatever about the main result of Dr. Dumfry's examination.

"Well, Herrick, I expect the worst; please let me know."

Garston did not look up, his brow contracted a little, and he spoke slowly.

"The child's vocal chords are almost altogether missing, and she will never speak at all."

He caught his breath with a quick sobbing sound, and glanced at his wife.

She was merely looking rather thoughtful.

When she answered, her husband knew that she would not say what she thought, for this much he *did* know of her, that when she forgot herself she always lifted her eyelids.

"Is there no cure?" she asked, gravely.

"None whatever; how could there be?" he answered harshly.

"There might be treatment," she hinted, quietly.

"Oh, yes," said Garston impatiently, "general health, good air, and so on, but the tragedy is complete: she will never speak."

He suddenly turned away, and, leaning against the mantelpiece, hid his face in his hands.

A sudden fury of jealous hate seized upon Anthea. Yes! her husband could weep for the child's dumbness, but he had not wept for hers.

She felt no pity for the man with his bowed head, no maternal instinct to comfort him woke within her, and she spoke coldly.

"Really, Herrick, I'm sorry that you take it like this. There may be other things which will compensate for the loss of voice."

Garston faced round, his eyes still full of tears.

"Merciful God, Anthea, have you no heart?"

"I thought you knew I had only a voice?" she answered, with cold mockery, some extraordinary per-

versity, possibly the dawning of another emotion of which she was unconscious, driving her to taunt her unhappy husband.

Garston lost all his self-control, and spoke furiously:

"I know it now, to my sorrow. You have never loved our child. Indeed, I sometimes think you hate it just because you had to sacrifice something for it. Yes—you are just a woman with a voice: nothing more! Heartless, cruel, selfish!"

Anthea suddenly lifted her eyelids, and looked Herrick full in the face, and her voice which she had carefully suppressed rang clarion clear through the room.

"After this disclosure of your thoughts, Herrick, it will be quite impossible for me to continue to live with you."

"Just as you please, Anthea," Garston answered, rather hoarsely; "the child and I only add to your unhappiness and you to ours."

Anthea had stood perfectly still hitherto, but now she took two or three steps forward, and spoke very slowly:

"What do you intend to do with the child, supposing I agree to part with her?"

"I shall place her for the time being at Cherry Blossom Farm," he answered, "the place where, to our sorrow, we first met."

"Ah!"

Anthea drew her breath in quickly, and then she flung her self-control to the winds, and spoke with gathering storm and passion:

"Yes, Herrick, we have been hopelessly wrong from the first. I married you for ambition and you married me from passion, and the outcome of that passion has been hate, for you hate me now even as I hate you. A man ruined my mother's life, and you have gone near to ruining mine. My life has been a hell for the last three years. Why should you wonder if I, living in hell, have become a devil? Take your child and go whither you will, and I will be free again: you did not care for my anguish, why should I care for yours? Arrange everything as you like; I am going abroad to-morrow."

Charles Garston's face had grown old and withered as he heard her speak, and as he saw the extraordinary eyes melt and glow with passion; he dropped wearily into a chair, saying in a voice out of which all life had died:

"You told me once, Anthea, that you lived for your voice and one other thing: if that thing was the complete ruin of a man's life and happiness, you may be glad to know that you have succeeded only too well. You have killed my life—you whom I have loved."

Anthea hesitated, and then turned away and left him.

By the door she paused, but Herrick never looked up; he felt that it was useless—he no longer had a wife. Then he heard the door close gently, and the soft sweep of Anthea's trailing skirts sounded for a moment on the polished floor outside the room. Then silence, a heavy silence—his wife was gone, and his soul in bitter anguish declared it was better so.

The great artist lay back in his chair, all the unhappiness of his married life surging over him.

Then when the pain was at its height, a little hand suddenly stroked his cheek, and, opening his eyes, he saw his child standing by him lifting solemn eyes of silent pity to his face.

"Little Poem, Cherry Blossom!" he whispered, gathering her to his bosom, and in the touch of her baby hands, in the pressure of her sweet lips to his, he found a healing balm.

But he never knew, for the child could not tell him, that Anthea had gone straight from the study and had lifted the child in her strong arms and had carried her swiftly to the door, opened it silently, had made the little one pass in, and then had shut herself outside.

In this manner Anthea lost her husband and her child and regained her voice, for through the years that lay before her, she never again lost it.

CHAPTER XX

'All now is silent; groans are fled,
Your child lies still, yet is not dead,
But rather, like a flower hid here,
To spring again another year.

—HERRICK.

SUMMER in rich hot beauty lay over Cherry Blossom Farm, the summer before Garston and Anthea had finally decided to go each his and her own way, and the cherry trees, laden with ripest and most luscious fruit, bent their boughs downwards, as if offering to mother earth the first-fruits of their harvest.

Underneath a certain white-heart tree lay young Herrick Sanders, a boy of eight years old.

He lay flat on his back and his big brown eyes watched the disappointed birds which braved the terror of the clappers and of the steam scarecrow, and endeavored to snatch a feast from between the meshes of the nets.

He was a sturdy, well-grown youngster, and the delight of his mother and father. He, as well as Julia Garston, was an only child.

True that in the churchyard there lay a tiny grave, on which flowers sprang year in year out, under whose fair blossoms slept a little sister who had only lived long enough to know that even a mother's care cannot

guard from bitter pain. Poor Bessie Sanders spoke of her as "my little snowdrop."

But Herrick remembered very little of this sister; he recollected only the tiny fingers and the tiny form, but he never forgot his father's face as he told him that God had wanted the little sister back again, and had taken her.

"I fink," he had answered, "that mummie wanted her more."

Jim Sanders had only kissed his boy and bade him run out and play quietly, and after a while Bessie Sanders' face had lost its pain; but beneath her comely cheerfulness there always lay a memory, and Herrick knew the look that came into mummie's eyes when she was thinking of his little sister. She always looked like that when his godfather, Mr. Garston, wrote and told her of his little girl, for Miss Julia and the baby sister had been born on the same day. Miss Julia had kept her birthday here, but the little sister kept hers in heaven. They were all very fond of Miss Julia, and when Mr. Garston had brought her down for a few days in May, Herrick had loved to amuse her and show her all his treasures.

"Herrick, laddie, Herrick! I want you," called Bessie Sanders, still comely, if a little weather-beaten and toil-hardened.

Herrick rolled over, and scrambled to his feet.

"Yes, mummie, I'm here; nearly asleep, I fink."

"Little laziness," laughed his mother, "and here's dad workin' in the heat in the far fields, and as thirsty as never was, I know."

"Let me take the beer then," said Herrick; "I know I fell last time, but you did say you would try me again, mummie, didn't you now?"

"That I did, my own boy," and her hand passed lovingly over the hot brow, pushing back the moist hair; "and I know you'll be careful this time, seeing as how dad is hot and thirsty."

"I'll not run a bit, and be, oh! so careful," returned Herrick, with sober earnestness.

"There's my brave laddie; mother is ever so busy," said Bessie, turning away to the house. "Seeing as it's Saturday, you can stay a bit, and I won't expect you. Now get your big hat, for the sun's fine and strong across the fields, and mind you go slow, laddie."

"Aye, mummie, and look where I'm going to. I reckon dad will want a lot o' beer to cool him down."

Herrick followed his mother into the house, and put on his big linen hat, and stood watching her preparations.

Bessie handed him the big tin can half full of good, wholesome, home-brewed ale.

"And how'll you carry the pasties?" she asked.

"In the knapsack what my godfather gave me," said Herrick, "and then I can think I'm travelin' like he did."

So Bessie strapped the knapsack, a very precious possession, onto Herrick's shoulders, and packed the pasties tidily and firmly within it.

Then she stooped and kissed him, and watched him tramp away, honest homely mother-love showing in her blue-gray eyes.

"He's a bonnie laddie," she thought to herself, and then her eyes wandered away to where the church spire was just visible. Herrick turned as he stood on the hill, and shouted in his clear young voice:

"I'll not run, truly and truly, mummie. Dad shall have his beer all safe this time."

She nodded, and waved her sunbonnet, and went into the house smiling cheerfully to herself at the memory of the last time he had carried the beer, how he and his puppy had got hopelessly mixed together, and had come home drenched in beer.

The little lad went on up the hill, under the laden fruit trees by the same pathway up which Anthea Argent had walked to meet her lover Charles.

His father was working in the hayfields about three-quarters of a mile distant, and Herrick tramped along sturdily, bent upon redeeming his honor both to himself and to his father.

What a lovely day it was! But wasn't the sun hot, though! Now there was only a field, a stile, a lane, a gate, and there was dad working in the field beyond, cutting down all the long grass and turning it into hay; but he would be carrying it now; the cutting was over a week ago.

Herrick reached the stile that led into the lane. It was what he called a twisty lane, and you could only see a little bit of it each way. The boy very carefully placed the tin can on the grass, then climbed over and lifted it up, and began to cross the rutty lane. He walked very slowly, for he had promised mummie not to run or hurry.

A wild whirr of machinery, but he was *not* going to break the promise, and the child walked very deliberately.

A whirr again, a jar, a confusion of sound, the wild hoot of a motor tearing along at thirty-five miles an hour.

The car was stopped at once. . . .

The haymakers who were in the field, hearing the hoot and sudden piercing cry, came leisurely across the field to see what had happened.

And so it chanced that Jim Sanders picked his boy up himself, and carried him to the bank under the cool shade of the trees.

The father heard his son's last words uttered with a little sob of disappointment:

"Dad, I'm 'fraid I've spilt the beer, and I *did* tell mum I wouldn't."

The driver of the car broke the silence.

"Can I—may we—the car ——" he stammered, "a complete accident."

Jim Sanders stood up and spoke to the haymakers:

"Your coats, mates," he said; "I'm goin' on to Bessie."

"But can't we?" began the driver of the car again.

Then Jim, good Tory as he was, because he was a farmer and a man who took things as he found them, turned upon the man, and his voice was harsh and wild:

"You rich men have taken our land and our labor from us, you've took the roads for yourself, and in this quiet lane you've killed my boy. The curse of the

God of the people be upon you and yours—you murderers!"

Then he strode away, up the hill and over it, and under the cherry laden trees; the little group of men followed slowly, bearing their burden with tenderness.

* * * * * * *

So it came to pass that Cherry Blossom Farm was childless, and that the sound of little voices never echoed in the rooms.

Harvest had come and gone, a harvest heavier than Jim had ever known it, trees and fields were garnered, and on one October night Jim made his way home through the driving rain, carrying a letter with him which he had brought from the post-office.

The kitchen was as tidy as ever, as he stood by the door taking off his wet coat, the fire burned as well as it had always done, the table was set as neatly as always, the table-cloth was as white, and the food as appetizing and well cooked; and Bessie herself not much altered.

Her face was thinner, the hair about the temples rather gray, and the honest eyes as steadfast as before. She came forward as lovingly as ever to help her husband into dry garments, but Jim knew what she had been doing while she waited for him.

"I've a letter from Mr. Garston for both of us," he said, when the meal was over.

"Ah!" said Bessie; "well, read it out, Jim, man."

She crossed the room to the window, and pulled aside the red serge curtains.

"The rain comes down heavy, Jim," she said.

"Yes, it's drivin' across the land and runnin' in channels over the fields," answered Jim, wearily.

Bessie turned away from the window with a stifled sob.

Jim gazed at her drearily from his seat by the fire, and Bessie sank down on the spotless stone floor by him, and sobbed out:

"And my boy out in it all for ever, and the earth growin' heavier on him day by day. Oh! Jim, our bonnie laddie!"

Jim stroked her head with his rough heavy hand.

"He's got his sister wi' him, anyway, and so he'll not be so lonely. He was always a good lad, and I don't doubt that the Lord's glad for her to have some one to play with."

"Like enough," agreed Bessie sadly, and then they were quiet for a while.

Jim pulled the letter from his pocket, and said:

"Mr. Garston's in a rare lot o' trouble himself. Miss Julia's never goin' to speak, and the doctors have ordered country air."

"Oh, Jim," and Bessie's voice quivered with fear; "oh! Jim, I couldn't have her here, and see her runnin' where my boy should be."

Jim Sanders was a wise man; he knew that his wife would be the better for some change in her life, and his deep loyal adoration of Garston had never changed. He went on speaking quietly:

"And Mrs. Garston's gone abroad. I doubt they've quarreled, and he wants Miss Julia to be where he

knows she'll be happy, and he'll be down himself whenever he can manage it."

"Our lad thought a lot of Miss Julia," the mother was speaking to herself, "and he would have been rare and sorry to hear that she would never speak. Very well, Jim, I don't suppose it will be for long."

"I wonder if Mrs. Garston will be down at all," said Jim, after he had read Garston's letter to his wife.

"No," returned his wife, "and better not. That marriage was a mistake from the very beginning, and I never *can* like Mrs. Garston, good-looking though she is. I expect she's only too glad to be rid of the child, and will take up her singin' again. Oh! Jim," and a sob rose in her throat, "do you remember when she and Mr. Garston sang: 'When we two were mayin'"? I'll be glad when the day comes that our souls are at home with God. It's like livin' in lodgin's always when your little ones are wi' Him. How can Mrs. Garston bear to leave the baby, and she so pretty too?"

"I'm sorry for Mr. Garston, he's takin' this hard," said Jim soberly. "Ah, Bessie, when you know what trouble is, it makes you soft to others."

"Very well, Jim; her nurse will be wi' her for a time, I suppose."

"Yes, but she's to be married soon, and then there will be another one, Mr. Garston says."

"It's to be for a time only, though, Jim," said Bessie, anxiously.

"Just as you think, Bessie; but I 'ud like to do a good turn to Mr. Garston. He's been very good to

us, you know, and he helped us over that bad year, when that frost killed all the blossom, and there was hardly a pound's worth of fruit on the trees. He *does* love the blossoms, doesn't he?"

"That's because he met his wife here," said Bessie wisely; "for whatever she thinks of him, he fair worships her, and he's the sort that don't change."

And so Baby Julia came to live at the farm. Had the couple not been childless, Garston would not have trusted his little one to them, for he would not have cared for her to form too deep an affection for his little godson—good boy though he had been. As it was, he knew the simple goodness of the bereaved mother and father, and when after a while the nurse left to be married and Bessie begged for the entire charge of the child, he acquiesced at once.

Bessie was an inveterate child lover, and Baby Julia's loving nature and hers were strangely akin. The presence of the child made her life bearable.

Watching Julia dancing under the blossoms, or sitting among the buttercups, "seeing if she liked butter," her great sorrow became sanctified, and she would fancy that a shadow-child played with Baby Julia, that her sturdy boy raced unseen by the little lady, protecting her from harm.

So Anthea's unwanted child healed the sorrows of the humble couple at Cherry Blossom Farm.

To her father she was all in all, and that winter, again, he sang only in England or on the Continent, spending many hours with his child. Her fondness for music was a perpetual delight to him.

Baby Julia at three years old could find music everywhere. Her nature was happy, and the child was supremely peaceful in her country life. Her sorrows were the hours of her father's departure, her joys the moments of his coming.

She gave no sign of memory as regards her mother. Anthea seemed to have died out of her child's life altogether.

Garston wrote to his wife at regular intervals, telling her of the welfare of their child, and Anthea invariably acknowledged these short notes with answers even curter.

They heard of each other through mutual friends; they read of each other in various papers. Each of them lived a life of public triumph. Anthea Argent's reappearance on the concert stage was hailed with acclamation. She had her soul's desire of triumph and success, and at first she found it satisfying.

Then something upset her moral inertia. The coupling of her husband's name with a famous woman singer at a public performance, a duet which she had been used to sing with him, his name in print. Little things of great spiritual significance, but Anthea, vaguely conscious that all was not well with her, turned with all her powers to her art.

Her other purpose came again into her life. She desired no melodramatic vengeance upon the man who was her father, but the hatred of him was part of her being, and to stifle vain regrets she fostered the hate, and deliberately set various inquiries to work.

So things went on with these two, until Baby Julia was verging on her sixth year.

For three years husband and wife had never met, and there seemed no likelihood of their ever doing so.

CHAPTER XXI

God, Who's in Heaven, will hear from thence,
If not to th' sound, yet to the sense.

—HERRICK.

EARLY summer once more lay upon the land, and a soft cool breeze was blowing over Cherry Blossom Farm.

Bessie Sanders, tying Julia's sunbonnet, stooped and kissed the dainty face.

"Don't go beyond sight, Blossom," she said, lovingly. Julia made a quick gesture, and pointed to the trees. "Ah! you want to go up to the trees to hear your harp; very well, lovey, I can see you from the door. 'Tis still early."

The child, a slim maiden, but very little changed in appearance, nodded her head, and walked slowly up the path under the trees.

Bessie's voice was much more refined than of yore, and her words altogether more purely pronounced. Garston had intimated that since music meant so much to his child, only beautiful sounds must be uttered in her hearing. Bessie had accordingly tried her hardest and, being a natural music lover, all the uncouthness had vanished from her voice; honest Jim had not been so successful, but still he had improved.

Julia clambered slowly up the little path, and Bessie

watched her jealously; the child was walking in a golden pathway of sunlight, and the westering sun shone in gleams between the branches of the trees upon her little figure.

Julia loved buttercups, and she stooped every now and then and gathered one. She added a daisy to the little bunch of wild flowers she was carrying, and then she picked a little wild parsley, and before she reached the tree in which Jim had arranged an æolian harp for her, her little hands were full of flowers.

Julia was very intent on her flowers this evening.

She held the buttercups up to the light, and let the sun play upon them. From time to time she looked up at the tree, smiling with satisfaction as soft weird sounds came from the harp. When the wind grew stronger, the harp gave forth sweeter and more intense notes, and Julia would drop her flowers and clap her hands.

But the wind died away, and Julia bent all her attention upon the buttercups and daisies; she was weaving them into a wreath for Bessie to put in water to be ready for daddy to-morrow.

Auntie Bessie always understood her, and so did daddy. Uncle Jim didn't always, but that did not matter so much. Julia considered a voice almost superfluous, for all her little world understood her without words. She held the wreath up again to catch the sunlight. Suddenly, she was aware that a tall woman was standing a little way off, and that the sunlight on this woman's hair made it prettier than the buttercups.

The child looked up at the woman, and the woman stood looking down at the child from underneath lowered eyelids. Julia gazed at her fascinated; something in the broad brow and half shut eyes fascinated her, for she was very much her father's child.

Then the woman came nearer, and knelt down before the child, and took her hat off and said slowly, taking the child's hands in hers:

"Julia, do you remember me?"

But as Anthea spoke, the wind rose again, and played upon the harp, and Julia's eyes left her mother's face, and filled with a dreamy delight.

"Julia, do you know me?" repeated Anthea.

The mother's voice, deep and sweet and living, was altogether new to the child's ears. Julia remembered sound rather than sight, but something vague seemed to come back to her, and the sweet little face grew puzzled.

Again Anthea asked:

"Julia, don't you know me, little one?"

Julia smiled doubtfully, and then a dim suspicion of tears came into her blue eyes; she would have liked so much to tell this woman that perhaps she had dreamed of her, and she gave one or two gestures which daddy would have understood at once, but this woman with hair like her own only opened her eyes wide and gave a sort of gasp.

In this first meeting with her child, Anthea had quite forgotten that Julia could not speak, and now the full force of the knowledge came to her with agony.

She held Julia's hands tightly, and looked into the troubled baby eyes.

Then Julia smiled up at her, and Anthea, letting the hands go, stood up.

"Never mind, Julia; I only wanted to see you. I'm going now."

Julia sprang up and took her mother's long white-fingered hand, and gave her a little pull towards the farm.

"No, I'm going away now, right across the sea. Julia, how's daddy?" And Anthea's voice trembled.

Julia clapped her hands, and shut her eyes, and pointed to the sun, and Anthea understood.

"Coming to-morrow, is he? Good-bye, little girl."

Julia clung to the hand for the first time in her life, and pulled so vigorously that Anthea knelt down again.

Julia's wreath was nearly ready; she took it up, and laid it in triumph on this woman's hair.

The faint tinge of color in Anthea's pale cheeks vanished, as she felt her child crowning her; kneeling there, she felt a strange sensation pass through all her being.

But Julia was not satisfied, and very gravely she laid her little hands upon Anthea's lowered eyelids, and opened her mother's eyes.

Then she clapped her hands again, and danced and smiled.

Anthea waited, and then she stood up and went away, carrying her hat in her hand and wearing the buttercup wreath on her stately head. As she went

the wind rose and played upon the strings of the harp with a wailing sound.

In the farm, Bessie had been standing at the door watching the child, and she had seen Anthea's tall figure suddenly appear.

The sound of her voice floated down to her ears. Jim came hurriedly through from the kitchen.

"Who's that talking to the child?" he demanded.

"Hush!" said Bessie; "it's Mrs. Garston."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Jim, "who would have thought it? Why, she's kneeling down."

"Hush," said Bessie; "come inside, Jim. We ought not to watch; a woman can't bury her heart forever. I do hope this will be the beginning of better things for Mr. Garston."

"But it would mean losin' the child!" said Jim, blankly.

"Yes," agreed Bessie sadly; "why, she's gone without a word, and Blossom's sitting listening again to the music."

"I expect she thinks no one saw her. Shall you tell Mr. Garston to-morrow?" asked Jim.

"Of course not, great stupid!" answered his wife; "leave them all alone. Who knows but that the child will bring them together again? She must remember her, for she's not one to make friends quickly—and the wreath was meant for Mr. Garston."

After a while Julia came in, but although rather thoughtful, she made no endeavor to relate her interview with the woman with the strange eyes. She would tell daddy, if she could, to-morrow; he would

tell her why she seemed to have seen that face before. But she was sure the voice was new.

* * * * * * *

Charles Garston lay on his back under the cherry trees, and his daughter pelted him with buttercups. It was a pretty scene, but it lacked completeness, for there were no peals of lovely laughter, and the only voice was the man's.

"Hullo, play fair, Little Poem," he said, as a particularly big buttercup fell into his mouth; "there may be worms or wasps about."

Julia clapped her hands, and cast a handful of buttercups into the air, and Garston sat up and stretched his arm out to catch her, but she evaded him, and danced back and forth like a sprite.

"I'm tired," her father said; "I had to sing to the King last night, and I think I made him forget he was a King. But I would rather sing to my little daughter."

Julia stood still, and then signified by a movement that she wanted his attention.

He understood at once, and answered:

"All right, girlie, I'm listening hard."

Julia pulled her curls into a sort of halo round her forehead, and tucked them into her dress at the back; she stood quite still before her father, folded her lips until they looked thin, and then lowered her eyelids over the dancing blue eyes.

Garston gazed at her in amazement, and then said roughly:

"Julia, open your eyes for God's sake; don't keep them half shut like that."

Julia opened them, but gave a little impatient stamp and lowered them again; then she moved a step nearer with childish dignity.

Then Garston understood.

"Julia, darling, are you asking who it is that does like that?"

Julia clapped her hands; daddy had been slower than usual, but he had found out at last what she meant.

"My little daughter, who told you? Who showed you how to do that?"

Julia pointed to the sun and shut her eyes, and then pointed again to the hill.

"She came from there last night, and went again. Did she see Auntie Bessie or Uncle Jim?"

Julia shook her head, and then repeated her imitation of her mother.

Garston took hold of his little daughter's hand, and drew her onto his knees, and pressed her curls to his cheek.

"Little daughter," he said tenderly, "it was your mother."

Julia looked up in wonder, then pointed to her mouth.

"Yes, dear, when she last saw you her voice was gone. But it came again, and now she sings much better than daddy, as the sun shines brighter than the moon."

But Julia would not allow this. She shook her curls

vigorously, and then, pointing to the hill path, shut her eyes for a moment, and tried to pull him to his feet.

But Garston smiled gently.

"Ah, no, my Cherry Blossom, mother went over the hill by herself, and when she wants us we shall see her coming back. Perhaps she will one day, for oh! my little Cherry Blossom, I want her, how I want her!"

Tears were not far from the singer's eyes as he told his little daughter of his heart's desire.

"Little one, did she kiss you? Tell me, and then I may put my lips where hers rested."

But Julia shook her head, and held out her hands, and clenched the little fists.

"Only held your hands, and held them very tight. And what did you do to her, little one?"

Julia plucked some buttercups and twisted them together, and put them on her curly head, and then pointed to the hill once more.

"You made a wreath, and she went away wearing it? Oh! Julia!"

He rose and stood facing the breeze.

Yes, it was here that he had first seen her coming to him—his cold, ambitious, mysterious wife and the mother of his child.

But he had learned something of her in his loneliness; her absence brought him something which he had never known in her presence.

He must wait until she turned to him, wait for her to come. He had yielded too much in the days gone

by. It is only the saint who can be unharmed by the adoration of a human being, and Anthea was no saint.

To win her he should have hurt her—should have been the normal man. Human nature is a queer mixture, and often we love best those who hurt us most. Garston, recognizing this, felt a wild desire to beat his stately wife into submission.

And then he pulled up his vagrant fancies with a groan. It was all much too late: she would never forgive him for caring so deeply for the child's loss, and for seeming not to have cared at all for her gain. He had never seen her since that night on which she had left him alone, and in his cold brief notes about the child he had never referred to Anthea's voice in any way.

She had not kissed her child; in all probability she had come only to see if the child's physique was in good condition. Having gone without a word, she probably felt satisfied that she had done her duty, and she would remain forever lost to him. Well, he had his daughter.

But the child found her father but an indifferent playfellow for the rest of the day.

When he wished her good-night he said:

"My Little Poem, you are a big girlie, and I want you to begin to learn all sorts of things. The first is to talk on your fingers, and then you and I can have lovely secrets."

The child flushed and nodded, and Garston went on:

"I am going to send a lady to you who will come

every day and teach you. She will show you how to play on the fiddle, but that's a secret. Daddy will learn everything you learn, and then he will be able to read your little hands."

The child flushed again, and looked up with appealing eyes to her father, and the dumb anguish asked:

"Am I never to speak, never to sing, never to say the words that spring into my mind?"

He kissed her again and again, and then said brokenly:

"Little Poem, you have more music in you than any one I ever knew, and the music shall speak for you since God has seen fit to lay His hand upon your lips forever."

Julia turned away, and one ugly sob escaped her. Then she mastered her emotion. But oh! never to speak, never to have a voice like every one else, never to make a pretty noise herself when even the pussies could talk.

She stood still, a long shiver passing over her little body. Then she turned round, and nodded bravely at daddy, who was sitting with his face half hidden by his hand.

Within her baby soul the child vowed a vow. She was of the same unbending, unconquerable spirit as her mother, and she said to herself that she would learn, and if she could not speak, others should speak for her.

When a few days later the teacher came, she found the child a marvelous pupil.

Week by week, Garston learned the language of the

dumb with her, and she had every mechanical appliance possible as a substitute for speech.

But her gift for music was, as her father said, unique, and the father would sing and the child play—and once again the child was perfectly happy.

Garston concluded that he had been right in thinking that Anthea's desire to see the child was only to discover if she were well, for after a few weeks he received this letter:

"Dear Charles, I saw Julia, as she has probably informed you—a short while ago. I find she has been quite untaught, and cannot make herself understood. I think it is time you found some one to teach her.

"Yours,

"ANTHEA."

The letter was written from New York. She had never called him anything but Charles in her letters, and yet it always hurt him afresh when he read it; but he wrote back quite as shortly, telling her that the child was now receiving the best of educations.

And he was—her affectionate husband, Charles Garston.

CHAPTER XXII

Let one be
A friendly patron unto thee.

—HERRICK.

"MY dear Mrs. Garston, may I tell you how well you sang last night?"

Anthea turned her head very slightly towards the speaker, and answered, lightly:

"Do you think I don't know that myself?"

"Well, of course, you've read it in the papers," said the man, whom the porter had announced as Mr. Balturin; "and when an audience goes demented as yours did last night, it must mean one of two things."

"Will you have some tea? If you will, just ring the bell," said Anthea, folding up a letter as she spoke; "which two things do you mean?"

"Yes, tea isn't a bad invention," said Mr. Balturin, ringing the bell as he was commanded, and then seating himself at a little distance from Anthea. "The two things are obvious: an audience goes demented either because you have upset its equilibrium and roused it from its ordinary lethargy by your performance, or because you have attracted it by your personality."

"And it was my singing then last night that had that effect?"

"Yes," said Balturin rather drily, "your singing—and your latest acquirement."

"What is my latest acquirement?" asked Anthea lightly, although she knew perfectly well what he meant.

"You sang with your eyes wide open last night," said the man; "you have been foolish, if I may be so impertinent as to say so, not always to have done so."

"Perhaps I have kept them closed till now, so that I might astonish the world by opening them," answered Anthea, mockingly. "Did you notice that they were open, or did some one tell you? You see, I do not deny the fact."

"I noticed," said the man calmly; "I always observe you closely. I like to study you, I am doing so now; and you have opened your eyes wide several times within the last few minutes. I have seen a good deal of you during the last two years, and I never knew before that your eyes were of different colors."

Tea was brought in at this moment, and Anthea silently poured out two cups; inwardly, she was analyzing herself. Why did it not hurt her, as it always had done hitherto, to be told her eyes were peculiar: she did not really care at all? During the last few days the astonishment that she had seen dawn in the faces of those to whom she had been speaking had affected her not in the least; when an expression of repugnance had come with swiftness into the face of a woman whom she had seen that morning,

only a sensation of amusement had arisen within her. And now she looked across at the man who rose to get his tea, and said quietly:

"You are very impertinent, Mr. Balturin."

"No, I am not," said the man calmly; "I simply say to you what I think. Of course, I do not pretend that I say everything I think, but you see I look upon you as an artist, and therefore speak to you as I would to a man."

"Your explanation, I suppose, is the right one; at least I will believe that you are not being impertinent," said Anthea, with more than a touch of coldness in her voice. "You have been a very useful friend during the last two years."

"But why have you opened your eyes on the world like this?" persisted the man. "You must forgive me for asking."

"Must I?" answered Anthea lightly; "I don't see why." And that was all the answer she gave.

She did not choose to say to this man, although he was a true and honorable friend, that the memory of a child's hands lifting the lifelong lowered lids had been stronger than all the fear of the world's opinion.

Balturin was a man of forty, very tall and long-legged, very well dressed, very clean shaven, slightly bald, and very well off as regards the world's goods. He was an Englishman, and might have been a great politician had he not been too careless of the world's opinion. He did not care to take the trouble to hide the fact that he looked upon politics as a huge game, in which the great issues of life and death and good

and evil were but moves, and because the world requires veneer over its self-seeking. He was a man of many gifts. At forty he had been everywhere and done everything. For the last two years he had been listening to Anthea whenever she sang.

He varied the occupation by listening to her husband, and he was watching with a somewhat dangerous interest the game of life as it appealed to Mr. and Mrs. Garston. Anthea had seemed to him at first merely a voice, but his knowledge of the world, faulty only in one particular, told him that she was also a woman.

The hiatus in his knowledge was merely that he had forgotten that he too was human, and that he too might not be exempt from earnestness.

Having now seen her eyes, the eyes of different hues, he knew that she was much more than a voice, and his interest as a spectator became keener. As for Anthea herself, she liked him in her own cold fashion; he never wanted to give her presents, he never attempted to touch her hand, he never offended her almost puritanical propriety of conduct, and occasionally he told her of Herrick. Intellectually and artistically, for he was an excellent musician of unimpeachable taste, they had much in common.

Austin Balturin finished his tea, and then said calmly:

"Of course, you have a reason for opening your eyes; women always have a reason for doing things. It is men who act without reason, although it is the custom to say just the opposite. Of course, you are

not going to tell me what I want to know—but I shall find out."

"To say that you never will would be to allow that I have a reason," retorted Anthea; "but I really should like your advice upon a difficult subject. I have here an offer from a certain Mr. Sylvester for a one-evening's engagement if I can manage to fit it in."

"I thought you artists mapped out your whole campaign years beforehand," said Balturin.

"Well, we do as a rule, but there are always a few days which we keep to ourselves, and I could give him one of those if I chose. Do you know the man?"

Anthea's lids dropped as she asked the question.

"Yes; I know him by repute," said Balturin, rather gravely.

"Yes, of course, we all know that he is a concert manager on a large scale, otherwise I should presumably have nothing to do with him." Anthea's voice was very cold. "But I mean what do you know of him as a man?"

"I can tell you what he looks like," answered Balturin, "but why do you want to know?"

"I have heard rumors about him," said Anthea, rather casually, "and I do not care to sing under a management where rumors of that sort circulate."

Austin Balturin leaned back in his chair, and looked meditative.

"He is a man somewhere between sixty and seventy, I should say, and must have been remarkably handsome; as it is, he is very well preserved."

"Well?" Anthea was gravely balancing a spoon

on the edge of her cup, and Balturin observed the trick lazily: she must be nervous, he had never noticed uneasiness of that sort before.

"Well, he is reputed to be wealthy, but I should say myself that he had lost heavily lately. He was running a series of prodigies, and they all had measles."

"Nonsense!" said Anthea sharply, and the spoon fell with a little clatter into the saucer.

"Have you cracked it?" the man asked, leaning forward. "No, that's all right—no, it is not nonsense: of course, it might have been scarlet fever, and not measles. I know it was either spots or stripes, and that let him in heavily. Moreover, I believe he dabbles in Wall Street."

"Yes, I dare say; but you have not answered my question," said Anthea impatiently. "What sort of man is he?"

"Is Mr. Garston particular?"

Balturin asked the question with great apparent innocence.

Anthea just glanced at him, and he caught a peculiar expression in the odd attractive eyes.

"I am, and that is sufficient," she answered coldly.

"Then frankly I do not like the man; there are no end of ugly stories about him, and I know a few of them are founded on fact, although, of course, the greater number are *canards*. But why sing for him?"

Anthea's eyes were covered as she answered calmly:

"Well, you see, he offers me seven hundred and fifty for two songs, and I have a particular reason for wanting that money."

"When is the engagement?"

"Oh, not until November, and he has several big concerts on. This will be the third in the series."

"Well, I've told you something of the man. I expect he will keep on his feet, for he is the sort of man who rarely fails. Let me know if you decide to accept the engagement."

"I will think it over," answered Anthea; "and now I must dismiss you. I have to practise, and my accompanist will be here in a few minutes."

Balturin stood up and held out his hand:

"Are you always going to open your eyes wide now, Mrs. Garston?" he asked in a tone of sober interest.

"If I can remember to do so," answered Anthea gravely, "but it is a lifelong trick of mine to close them. They are not really shut, you know. I can see perfectly well, but it is one of the things I wish to alter in my life."

"I heard Garston sing last week," Balturin said casually as Anthea shook hands with him.

"Ah, and was he in as good voice as ever?" Anthea was politely interested.

"I think so; he looks much older than you, and his hair seems to have gone white pretty early. He will have to take to dyeing."

"Mr. Garston is above such pettiness," Anthea said, haughtily.

"He seemed pretty well, though. I met him afterwards, at a sale; he was buying a violin, and was paying a tidy price for it. Does he play?"

"Not that I know of," Anthea said; "I expect it was for some one else. And now, good-bye!"

Austin Balturin went away feeling an added interest in the great woman singer.

"Is she separated from her husband, I wonder?" he thought to himself. "There's been some tragedy in poor old Charlie's life, and I shouldn't wonder if Mistress Anthea isn't at the bottom of it all. A woman with eyes like that is bound to work tragedy sooner or later. Jove, to think I never caught a glimpse of them all these years, and it must be at least seven since Charlie introduced me to his wife; they've not met for months, and yet each wants to hear news of the other. Wonder what the root of it is. Mrs. Anthea gave up the stage for some years, I know; I heard of her retirement when I was doing Eastern Asia."

Austin Balturin was given to the study of humanity, and to do him justice he never put to ill uses the knowledge that he gained from human books.

He had no end to further, he had nothing to gain; he only wished to live his lazy, intellectual, interesting and selfish life exactly as he did.

CHAPTER XXIII

No fault in womankind at all
If they but slip and never fall.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA had said that she was expecting her accompanist, and so she was; but she had an appointment with some one else first. As the hands of her watch pointed to five o'clock a Mr. Gregory was ushered in.

Anthea bowed stiffly, and motioned him to be seated.

He sat down rather clumsily, holding his hat in one hand and a strong stick in the other; he was rather short and stout, and looked eminently respectable and dull; his mustache was light and his hair scanty.

"Well, madam," he began; "I have followed out your instructions, and can lay before you in full detail the life of the gentleman in whom you are interested."

"I do not want the details—only the general outlines," answered Anthea, with a slight gesture of disgust.

"I have traced him back for thirty years or so, and here is a recent photograph. It's in all the shop windows."

The man handed her a photograph, and Anthea examined it closely.

A tall stout man, in evening dress, thick curly hair, ringed fingers, well-made nose slightly on one side, and

a heavy jowl, decorated with a dark mustache; but the lips were thick, although the brow and eyes were good.

A man one would say who worshiped the world and the flesh, and possibly the devil into the bargain. A man the touch of whose hand would send a shudder through an innocent boy or girl. Anthea gazed steadily at the portrait in her hand, and did not once look away from it as she continued the conversation:

"I obtained a good many details from one of his mistresses, and he has long ——"

Anthea made a gesture: "There, that will do—you mean he is a bad and immoral man."

"Roughly speaking, I suppose so," Mr. Gregory answered cheerfully; "he certainly *has* a very bad name everywhere."

"And his financial position?" questioned Anthea.

"Rotten!" was the concise answer; "he's head over heels in debt, his credit is practically gone, and only the fact of these concerts coming off in New York in the autumn keeps him together. You see, he has some big names. There's Madame Lavago, she best knows why she's singing for him; then there is the great violinist—oh! and several more. He should make a good thing of it. Also I understand that he has made a bet that he will engage *you*."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," and Mr. Gregory was evidently interested in his subject. "He's had to pay a tidy sum down for the ——," mentioning one of the biggest theatres in the world, "and if nothing upsets his calculations, he will certainly clear himself."

"Even if he cannot obtain my name?" asked Anthea quickly.

"Oh, yes, I should think so. He's got such a hold over a number of great people, whose reputation is none too good, and who don't care to have a ball of questions set rolling."

"Thank you," said Anthea stiffly.

She hated this side of her career, this seaminess, this ugliness which had very rarely drawn near to her.

Mr. Gregory rose.

"That's all, ma'am, I think. Any details which you wish to know I can let you have, and, of course, the whole of this is absolutely confidential."

"Still, I suppose you have notes of the case?" asked Anthea, leaning forward and reaching for a check book which had been lying ready for her.

"Numbers only, and the details we carry in our heads. I may say, madam, that we never give a client away, even when better pay is mentioned. It would be bad for our profession if we could not be depended on."

"I suppose it would," answered Anthea thoughtfully, as she wrote the check. "Well, here is the account with a little commission over."

"Thank you, madam," answered the man briskly.

There were whispers, just springing up into existence, that Mrs. Garston was separated from her husband, and that their child was an idiot; but "Mr. Gregory" had investigated for himself, and had found that this was not so. A mutual separation most likely —people often got tired of one another. His work

had engendered lack of confidence in the stability of human affection.

Mr. Gregory pocketed his check, picked up his bowler hat, bowed profoundly, and took his departure. Anthea never heard of him again, although he always kept an eye on her name when it appeared in the papers.

Left to herself, Anthea sat looking at the photograph which the inquiry agent had left with her, and as she looked the expression on her face was not pleasant.

The broad brow and upper part of the head always had contradicted the lower, and now her lips grew very thin, and the jaw took on its coldest curve. It would not be well for the man or woman who crossed the singer's path while she was in this mood.

After a while she opened a case which was lying on the table, and drew out a small packet. The packet was tied with string and sealed. It had been all over the world with her, but there was no melodrama about her to-night—no choking cries, and thoughts of "what might have been," no long gazes at the contents, no trembling of the hands.

She opened it, and before her lay two photographs, a man in early middle age and a young girl. Underneath the portrait of the man was written, "Munro Sylvester," and underneath the girl's, "Dolores Argentino."

The handwriting was Anthea's own, and it was in big unformed childish letters. She remembered writing the names, after her mother had told her her own

sad history—for the two faces which lay before her on the table were the faces of her mother and her father.

Poor young mother! Anthea thought of what she herself had been at sixteen, and she felt no desire to condemn the piteous sinner. She sat, looking down at the portraits, her memory going back into the past. She had told Garston the barest outlines of her history, but had told them faithfully, for Anthea had been too self-centred to be anything but truthful all her life.

Chance had brought her once again into the area wherein the man Munro Sylvester had his being, and she was weighing many things in her mind as she sat looking down at the two portraits.

Only once had she seen this man, and that was in her years of poverty.

But the occasion was burned into her memory.

Her mother had taken her to a carnival, and the child Anthea had sung and danced in a public garden, her mother at the time having found temporary employment at the Gardens.

The entertainment was over, and Anthea, a thin slip of a girl of thirteen, was going round the little tables in the dusky light, searching for eatable pieces of cake.

As she was pursuing her search her mother came out to her.

The fairy lamps were nearly all extinguished, and her mother, with her big eyes, white thin face, and skeleton hands, looked to her like a ghost. Her hair, copper-colored as Anthea's, but long since shorn of its lovely sheen, hung in disorder round her face, and her brown eyes were wild and staring.

"Come with me!" she said, and her voice was shaking. "Come with me—I have something to show you."

Anthea, usually silently rebellious, was awed by her mother's manner, and she followed after her as she moved quickly among the trees. In the central part of the garden the lamps were still burning, and a couple were prolonging their supper at a little table. The light fell very brightly upon the man and the woman; the face of the woman had passed from Anthea's memory, but every detail of the man's appearance had seared itself into her brain.

He was very well dressed, very well groomed, and he was leaning forward with eyes like the eyes of a bird of prey watching the face of the woman.

The Anthea of the present day glanced at the old photograph and at the new.

Yes—he was very little altered.

Her mother had held Anthea by the hand, and the clasp of her thin fingers had grown fiercer and hotter.

"Look at the man, child," she had said; "look at him."

"I am looking," Anthea had answered gloomily.

"Shall you remember forever?" had been the words that came next, uttered fiercely.

"I never forget, mother, you know." Anthea even then knew herself.

Her mother had then drawn her away, and in a fierce whisper had told her that the man was Munro Sylvester.

Anthea knew her mother's story, for her mother,

with that strange vanity that so frequently prompts confession, had told it to her many a time, and Anthea had often in her childish intolerance condemned her wild unbalanced parent.

But as she had seen her mother that night, even then far down the death road, wild and lost for love, something else woke forever in her narrow, childish nature.

The woman was outside the pale. The man was well dressed and well fed, wealthy, still young, still able to enjoy, still certain of comfort in this world whatever he might expect in the next.

The daughter of the man saw this, saw it with all the vivid coloring of the Italian night, and with all the suppressed drama of her nature.

She looked straight at her mother, drawing in her breath with a quick gasp. And the poor remnant of childhood that the girl had possessed fell from her for always as she spoke:

"I'll not forget, mother; I'll kill him one day."

Then, before either mother or daughter could say more, they were summoned with coarse words of command to perform various menial offices, which occupied them far into the night.

For years Anthea dwelt upon the thought of vengeance until it had become ingrained into her being, together with her keen ambition.

She had come to see, of course—for she was very much of a woman of the world—that killing or any vengeance of melodramatic character was entirely out of the question. And, looking at the photographs, she

smiled grimly to herself at the fantastic ideas that had seemed possible to her ten years ago.

She had not the remotest intention of confronting her parent, and disowning and cursing him; none excepting herself knew she was the daughter of Munro Sylvester, and none should ever know. But there were subtle ways of punishing this man, and as she sat deep in unholy thought, a vague scheme began to formulate itself in her mind.

She reviewed slowly and in an orderly fashion the facts of this man's life. He had had no mercy on her mother, he had not even given her money when she had lost her voice; he had callously and hideously cast her away to starve: then afterwards his life had apparently been lived in the same groove, one long gratification of his own desires at the expense of others.

Had he done the world of music any service? No, for his career had pandered entirely to the popular taste, and had in no way given it aught but gilded poison.

No—he deserved no mercy—and, so far as his daughter could guide fate, he should have none. Anthea was not a religious woman in any sense of the word: she had made art her god, and had served the god faithfully.

Her ambition was satisfied—and her heart empty. Her voice was divine—and her child was dumb. The world worshiped her, called her its darling, and her husband had absolutely ceased to care.

And this castle of gold with its empty rooms she had built for herself from her own design!

At first the glitter and sheen of it, its wonderful lines and curves, had been more than enough; but now she was owning to herself that it was all "Dead Sea apples," and exceeding bitter.

The touch of the little hands upon her lowered eyelids had opened her eyes physically and mentally. Her soul was very much in the balance, and no outside observer—least of all such a one as Mr. Balturin—could have said which power would claim her.

CHAPTER XXIV

Thus, thus we live, and spend the hours
In wine and flowers.

—HERRICK.

MR. BALTURIN knew that all Mrs. Garston's engagements for that year were in the States, and all Mr. Garston's either in England or on the Continent. After casting up probabilities in his mind, he determined that he would be able to dissect Anthea better if he could find out rather more about his friend Garston; so he repaired to England, and one Sunday morning called upon him. But the singer was out of town, having gone down for the week-end to Cherry Blossom Farm.

At first he thought he would follow him there, but a moment's consideration told him that he would probably learn more about his friend if he went about the clubs.

At the end of the day he was quite satisfied. He had picked up a heterogeneous mass of information about Garston, and it took him the whole evening to pigeon-hole it in his orderly mind.

Firstly, it was rumored that Garston was going to divorce his wife because of her predilection for himself. This was most entertaining—particularly so when he disclosed his own identity to his informant,

who thought that he had been making a favorable impression on this exceedingly well-dressed man.

Secondly, it was well known that husband and wife had sworn never to hear each other sing, or even ever to live in the same country.

Thirdly, they were perfectly good friends and even an affectionate couple, but were bent on making a huge fortune for their idiot child, to whom they were both devoted.

Fourthly, that the child was a dumb idiot, a cripple, a musical genius whom they were educating in secrecy, and that it had two heads, and two voices—a tenor and a soprano.

Fifthly, that Garston was desperately in love with a music-hall celebrity, and that Mrs. Garston was going to institute proceedings for the restitution of conjugal rights.

Sixthly, that some years ago Mrs. Garston had tried to cut her throat after she had quarreled with her husband, that she had injured her voice, that it had taken several years to recover, and that was why she had retired into private life for a period.

Seventhly, his informant had met some one who had seen the scar.

Eighthly, they were just an ordinary couple whose work separated them, but when Mrs. Garston had been in England a little while ago she had stayed with her husband and child. Garston himself had said incidentally to the speaker that his wife had been down to the farm early that summer.

Balturin enjoyed himself immensely, nor was he

altogether annoyed at the coupling of his name with Anthea's; but it did make him think a little. Then he decided that his interest in her was purely intellectual, and he proved it to himself by the fact that here he was in England, collecting information, whilst he might have been in America hearing her sing and seeing her.

One thing really gave him considerable food for thought.

Some change *must* have taken place in Anthea, for all the American papers for a day and a half had devoted columns to the discovery that she had different colored eyes, and all those who had seen or known Anthea formerly denied this, and asked him if it were true. Sometimes he denied it with careful truth, other times he gracefully avoided answering; but although a mere newspaper detail it *meant* something, and that something Balturin set himself to discover.

Much to his astonishment Charles Garston rang him up at his club, and invited him to supper after a concert at which he was singing. With the invitation he enclosed a ticket for the concert.

Balturin found himself waiting rather eagerly for Garston's appearance. He was exactly the same, rather grayer perhaps, rather thinner, singing even better than usual. At supper he was precisely what he always had been—an extremely good fellow.

Cautiously Balturin introduced Mrs. Garston's name. He had heard her sing ten days ago, and, watching very closely, he saw the muscles in Garston's wrist tauten and then relax.

He is not indifferent, thought Balturin.

"It's a long time since I heard my wife sing," said Garston in complaining tones; "our engagements are fixed up some years ahead, and we've got them into a howling muddle. She's in one place, and I'm in another."

He doesn't want me to know there's a separation, thought Balturin.

"Can't you cut a few?" he asked. "Mrs. Garston's voice is finer than it ever was, I think. America is simply wild about her, and is ready to burn the hall or theatre down if she fails to put in an appearance."

"Yes, she's been in the papers a good deal," laughed Garston; "and I expect she is in a fearful temper. There were columns in one rag last week about her eyes."

"Yes, I was astonished when I saw her eyes. They are a great asset."

Garston gave an impatient gesture as Balturin said this, and then laughed.

"Quite needlessly, my wife has always been annoyed with her own eyes, but I——" his voice sounded dreamy; "I fell in love with them the first time I saw them."

(He still loves her—wonder if she has opened them to please him, thought Balturin.)

"Well, the reporters ought to be thankful; it's made yards of copy." Balturin flicked a crumb away as he spoke. "By the bye, does the child inherit the peculiarity?"

"No," answered Garston regretfully, "no; she has

lovely blue eyes, but she has much of her mother in her. I say, Balturin." Garston leaned forward and lowered his voice, although there was no one near.

"Yes," Balturin's voice immediately adopted a confidential inflexion.

"Would you mind telling me what they say of the child? I know every one talks to you, and you forget nothing."

Balturin answered promptly:

"They say she is the two-headed Nightingale over again."

Garston drew a breath of relief, and laughed.

"Oh! that's all right; they evidently feel bound to make things hum. See here, this is a photo of our child."

"An uncommonly good-looking little beggar," said Balturin, smiling back again at the laughing face of the dainty child; "do you think she is like her mother?"

The question succeeded. Garston pulled out a second photograph, and handed it across the table, saying eagerly:

"Just compare the two."

(Of course, he's in love with his wife still, and that means that *she* is not so with him, thought Balturin.)

"Well, she's like you, I think," he said in tones of grave consideration; "but there is a touch or two of her mother."

"Julia is rather delicate, or, I should say, has been," said Garston, as if he were thinking of something else; "and as her mother and I are away so much she lives with an excellent couple in the country. She is a

musical genius, and we have to be very careful of her. But I don't expect this interests you, Balturin," Garston added with a laugh.

"On the contrary," answered Balturin with perfect truth, "I am intensely interested in what you say; you know my hobby is the study of humanity."

"To what purpose?" asked Garston with sudden dryness; "for their benefit, or for your own?"

"My own, of course," answered Balturin lightly; "I don't know any one but Arbuthnot who works entirely for other people's benefit."

"Ah, Arbuthnot!" and Garston spoke quickly; "I haven't seen him for years, and he and I are great pals, you know. Where is he?"

"Oh, he's conducting some mission or other in the States—investigation work, and so on, with a lot of Johnnies who belong to some Monastic order."

"Monks!" ejaculated Garston. "All the Arbuthnots are ecclesiastically minded, but I should have thought old Cecil the last to become a monk."

"Oh, well, not exactly a monk, you know. A seven years' vow, I believe, not a lifer," explained Balturin. "I don't mind betting that Arbuthnot will leave at the end of his seven years: the Chastity and Poverty vow would be second nature to him; but I really do not think he could manage the Obedience part."

Garston laughed.

"You've hit it, Balturin," he said. "Old Cecil never truckled under to any one, least of all to his superiors."

"He's a man who had the world at his feet," went

on Balturin lightly. "I know for a fact he could have married Alys Mayder; had he done so, Sir Lewis could have helped him enormously, but he chucked it all. He has grown rather thin, looks older and sterner, and has a trick now of making a man feel he's on the high road to hell."

"Have you seen him lately?" asked Garston. "I must be off now, Balturin; I've got an appointment."

"Saw him in New York last week; we met by accident in the street. He was wearing a kind of habit, and looked yards high; but he was quite glad to see me. He asked after you, and I told him I had just come from tea with Mrs. Garston," said Balturin, cheerfully. "He sent kind regards to your wife and love to you."

Garston stood up and held out his hand.

"Well, I'm going to hear my wife sing pretty soon, I hope. I've got a blank space, kept it on purpose, for next month, and now that we can do the crossing in five days, it's worth a flying visit."

"I'm going back again: have got a piece of work I want to see the end of," answered Balturin, "so to our merry meeting under the stars and stripes. Salaam, old man."

Balturin was quite satisfied with his little journey, and he went back again to play with fire, though he did not know it.

But then who does know the nature of the commodities with which he deals? Anthea's life was strangely affected by this careless man's actions.

CHAPTER XXV

As I went my private way,
An olive branch before me lay.

—HERRICK.

JULIA drew the bow across her violin, and a long full note floated up amongst the branches: she was harmonizing with the wind that rushed over the æolian harp, and her manner of so doing would have delighted a musician. She had taken to playing, so Uncle Jim said, like a duck to water: there was no keeping her away from her violin.

She had grown considerably in the last few months. In some ways she was old and thoughtful for her years; perhaps this was the result of her inner life of silence which she was forced to lead.

But she was quick to understand, for she had her mother's brain and her father's heart. She played softly, following the wailing notes of the wind with extraordinary skill. She was waiting for her father's coming—for her weekly treat.

There he was! Down went the violin, very carefully though, and Julia's long legs were speeding along the winding path. With a wild spring she was clasped in his arms.

"And how are Auntie Bessie and Uncle Jim?" Garston asked. "Little Poem is perfectly well, I see, and learning ever so much."

Julia nodded, and spoke rapidly on her fingers, and her father, who had devoted a good many hours a day to learning the language of hands and signs, followed easily.

"Yes, heaps of things. I made a pudding yesterday, and oh! daddy——" Julia slipped out of his arms, and pulled him vehemently up the hill after her.

She led him to her tree and, taking up her violin again, played as she had played before.

Garston stood listening, forgetting that it was his child playing, just hearing mortal music mingling with the harmonies of heaven. Of course, it was simple—but the effect was fairy-like.

Julia ceased playing, and gazed with some expectation at her father.

He stooped and kissed her, his eyes suspiciously bright.

"Cherry Blossom," he said solemnly, "the Gods have given you more than they have taken away."

Julia put the instrument down, and spelled out:

"It's my voice. It speaks instead of me."

"Yes, my baby, and it shall speak in tones that are never forgotten," said Garston solemnly. "Now, Little Poem, forget music and listen."

Julia nodded, and her father sat down on a bench. She climbed into his lap, and by a gesture indicated that she was ready for him to speak.

"Little Poem," he began, "daddy is going over the sea next week."

She looked up at him, a mist of tears gathering at the back of the blue eyes.

"And how would Little Poem like to come with daddy for a holiday? We will go in a big ship, stay in New York for two or three days, and then come back again, when daddy will stay here for a whole long week."

Julia's eyes grew big with glee: a ship, the sea, and daddy for all that time!

"Julia, I'll tell you a secret," he whispered. "I'll tell it you low in case the winds hear it."

The child gazed solemnly at her father.

"We are going to hear mother sing, and, Cherry Blossom, there's never a voice like mother's all the world over."

Julia shut her eyes involuntarily, in imitation of her mother's mannerism.

"No, Little Poem." Garston's voice broke a little. "I heard the other day from some one who sees a lot of mother, that she opens her eyes always now. Oh! Julia!" He leaned his head on the child's hair, so wondrously like her mother's, and thought drearily of the space of years between him and his wife.

Time brings comfort and softening of trouble; but it also brings separation.

Garston had not found comfort, or even softening. His was a loving emotional nature, and he had something of a woman's heart within him, for all true artists are man and woman.

Anthea had treated him *so* badly that he loved her all the more. Her clear cold crystal nature had attracted him with mesmeric power.

She had been to see the child; perhaps if he sought

her with the child, they might be reconciled. He was filled with a wild longing to hear her voice again, as he had heard it in the days before the coming of their daughter.

Julia slipped her childish hand into his, and clasped his tightly; with the other she stroked his hair turning gray so rapidly.

"Should you like it, Little Poem?" he asked gently.

Julia clapped her hands and laughed, and then she looked gravely towards the house.

"Yes, Auntie Bessie thinks it would do you good, little one," her father said cheerfully; "and your teacher needs a holiday. I'm going to get a nice nurse for you, who will help you dress, as daddy's only a clumsy man."

Julia frowned, and Garston laughed.

"We must not run daddy down, must we? And now, Julia, come and show me all the pigs and chickens and the flowers."

A long happy afternoon was spent, Julia showing her father all her secret places, all her cozy corners, where the prettiest flowers grew.

They were capital companions, these two, and understood each other perfectly.

Great emotions always make us elemental, and Garston schemed and thought of how he would appear before Anthea with Julia. He dreamed impossible dreams of which he was the soulful hero. He built greatly on the fact that she was overcoming her trick of lowering her eyelids; surely she was doing it because *he* had once asked her to!

It was with hearts full of hope that the singer and his child set forth to win back the cold proud mother.

Julia was wild with delight; the whole world was new to her, everything was full of music, and she was going to hear mother sing, that mother whom she remembered, as in a fleeting vision, tall and stately, with hair like her own, and wondrous fairy eyes.

Garston traveled under an assumed name, for he did not want Anthea to know that he was coming. Of course, many of the passengers on the great liner discovered his identity, and they all thought his child, who was so continually with him, a very silent little mortal. Some strange instinct kept Julia from talking on her fingers in public, but she was so quick to understand, so expressive in gesture and face, that the few who tried to make her acquaintance thought her shy and silent, but did not discover she was dumb.

Her teacher, a certain Miss Raynes, a good-looking, very capable young woman, had volunteered to act as nurse during the flying visit, and under her most judicious care the child was very carefully tended—and most wonderfully happy.

The voyage was a record one; day and night the marvelous machinery whirled, and the great turbines did their work.

Having arrived in New York, Julia went to bed, repeating in her mind: "To-morrow mother sings."

* * * * * * *

Anthea was tired. Her tour was nearing its end,

and the gigantic distances to be traveled during an American tour make it a fatiguing experience.

She was also depressed, and decidedly cross, and half a hundred little things had added to her crossness.

Her dress had had to go back to the costumière to be altered, and since she liked to dress at leisure, the delay had annoyed her. Then she had a slight headache, and her maid, after having completed Anthea's toilette with great skill, had caught a button of her dress in Anthea's hair, and had disarranged the simple coiffure.

The maid had nearly wept, but her mistress had only said:

"Please be careful, Année."

Altogether Anthea was slightly on edge, and since this was a big occasion, she was always conscious of the possibility of her voice going wrong.

Then at the last moment, her perfectly appointed car broke down, and she had to send for a hired one. Then there was an uncomfortable crush, and Anthea's car, not being recognized as the car of the great prima donna, had to stand and wait with others.

The cars were all drawn up waiting for a clear road, and Anthea was leaning back impatiently, for she had not much time at her disposal, when another car moved up, and for a few minutes the two were parallel. A sudden momentary cessation of the street noises took place, and in that cessation Anthea heard her husband's voice saying:

"My darling, wrap yourself up, it would be dreadful if you caught cold."

She knew the voice, knew its every accent, although she had not heard it for several years.

She leaned forward.

A well-appointed car stood by hers, and, inside, the electric light was glowing.

Yes, there sat her husband, well groomed, and with a smile upon his face, which she remembered very well, a smile not very often seen by her.

By his side was a lady in evening dress, sufficiently young and good-looking, and in the glimpse that Anthea caught of her, she was pulling her opera cloak up about her bare throat.

Then Anthea's car moved on.

Garston had leaned forward, and had pulled the wraps up about Julia's throat, for there was a cold wind blowing up from the sea.

The little girl was glowing with anticipation, and could hardly keep still—besides, daddy looked so awfully happy.

Miss Raynes pulled her own cloak up, and watched the merry life about her.

She was seated by Garston, and the child was almost buried in the luxurious depth of the car facing them.

"I've taken a box," said Garston, "and we shall be able to hear and see without being seen. I don't want to startle my wife by my sudden appearance; this is a surprise visit." He laughed with boyish glee.

"All right," nodded Miss Raynes with kindly comprehension, and tolerance; "and I had better take Julia home as soon as her mother has finished singing?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said her father reluctantly;

" she mustn't be over excited. Anyway, I'll let you know what I want."

He leaned forward and took his child's hand, and Julia, who saw that her father was deeply moved, clasped it again with loving tightness.

CHAPTER XXVI

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA'S car pulled up at the stage entrance, but again she was forced to wait for a few seconds as a crowd was sweeping past.

And strange coincidence, and yet perhaps not so very strange, since Charles Garston was a world-famous man, two men passed, and spoke of her husband.

"I say, did you see the great C. Garston just now?"

"I thought I knew the face—and was the decentish lookin' woman Mrs. G.?"

"That—not she!" And an unpleasant laugh followed. "I came over with him, and he was travelin' under an assumed name. She was booked as Miss Raynes, but these singin' Johnnies ——"

And the voices trailed off into the crowd.

Not a line of Anthea's cold, still countenance was altered, not a tremble shook her nerves. She moved towards her allotted place with more than ordinary dignity, but the eyes which were learning to face the world for the child's sake were once more hidden, and one or two acquaintances avoided her as she passed along the carpeted way.

A fierce jealousy was seething within her, a raging passion of scorn and anger, and mingled with it was an awful despair.

Her husband was faithless, he loved some one else; she had cast away a treasure, and the treasure had rolled in the mud and anchored itself to something unutterably loathsome.

"How *dared* he!" that was one thought, and another rang piteously after it:

"How *could* he?"

And she—she had been wondering if she could not end this tragedy, and all the time he had been finding consolation.

She had been wise always to think of herself, for as soon as she began to let the thought of the pain of others seem real to her, she was wounded in this awful manner.

With her customary self-control, she pushed away these thoughts, and concentrated all her being in the song before her.

Once again she stood before the throng, once again their wild acclaims filled the air, and once again a silence fell upon the people, as her accompanist struck the first notes of the prelude to her song.

From a darkened box three people watched her.

Miss Raynes sat well to the front.

So this tall and stately woman was her pupil's mother, the woman standing so imperturbably before a throng of the richest, keenest and most marvelous people in the world!

Well—it was worth the sea-sickness just to see her.

In the shadow father and little daughter sat side by side.

The child's eyes were dangerously bright and her cheeks flushed; her little hand sought her father's. He held it unconsciously, for he had forgotten the child, and saw only the woman.

There she stood, very tall, very still—very wonderful—the cold attractive woman whom he loved. Her mysterious eyes were widely opened, and she was gazing into space.

Anthea! Anthea! O, the pain of an absorbing love! O, the tearing agony of a thing so fragile, coming from the deep to pass away into nothingness!

Then on the tense silence broke the great prima donna's voice.

Garston did not hear his child's quick gasp of delight, and he did not know he was holding the little hand with cruel tightness; he was only conscious of the voice.

And as when he first heard her she had sung him into oblivion of material things, so did she once again. The voice of to-day was sweeter, grander, and much fuller of passion than the voice of years ago; but the passion was chaotic, and her husband understood her through her singing, as he had not been able to do through her personality.

Anthea was moved, was obsessed with some passion; she was singing to express a great emotion; her soul was flowing forth in sound. Father and daughter understood her inarticulate cry, for the words she said were not the words she sang.

When it was over, the theatre was filled with frantic applause. Garston came back again from the fairy land of sound, came back to hear his little daughter give a harsh strangulated sob—a sob that was caught back and hushed almost before he heard it.

He lifted the child on to his knee, and, encircling her with his arms, whispered into her ear:

"That was mother! Ah, Cherry Blossom, isn't she wonderful?"

The child looked up at him with strained eyes of piteous pain, and the father understood the dumb agony.

The voice had revealed to the little one what she had lost forever, and a passion of despair passed over the childish brow.

"Shall we go home, my darling?" he whispered; "mother is going to sing once more."

Julia shook her head, and, bringing out a tiny handkerchief, valiantly wiped her eyes; but she sat motionless, and, leaning against her father, barely listened to the other performers. When once again Anthea's wondrous voice filled the auditorium, she sat up and listened very gravely.

When the notes were dying away, she quietly slipped down from her father's knee and stood beside him. Garston, seeing that the baby was overwrought, leaned forward and touched Miss Raynes on the shoulder, and said quickly and urgently:

"Take Julia home at once, please, Miss Raynes. I'm afraid this has been too much for her."

As he touched her on the shoulder, the light fell on

his face, for he had moved forward, and Anthea, bowing, caught the movement, and she saw him. Husband's and wife's eyes met.

For one long second the man's eyes held the woman's; then Anthea lowered her white lids and left the platform.

Garston sank back in his seat, feeling as if he had received an electric shock, for he had seen scorn and passion, resentment and something perilously like hatred, in the magnetic eyes.

He remained in his seat for a moment or two, and then sprang up. Calling a messenger, he sent him with his card in an envelope to "Miss Argent." But in a few minutes the man came back to say that Miss Argent had gone straight away in her car.

Garston received the message calmly, and then made his way out into the air.

Did she mean to avoid him? Or did she wish him to follow her?

Standing still, he said very emphatically:

"Damn!"

He had had enough of her folly.

He hailed a passing taxi, and drove to the hotel at which she was staying.

"Yes—Miss Argent has a suite on the first floor."

"Very well, I will go up unannounced."

"Pardon, but that is quite impossible."

"Very well, then, I will go in as I am announced."

"That also was—well, if the gentleman made such a point of it, and would not be denied. Thank you, sir, thank you."

"That is the door, sir."

Garston knocked, and, without waiting for the permission to enter, turned the handle and went in.

It was a big room, furnished with luxury and taste, and standing under an electric shade at the further end of the room, was his wife.

She had but just come in from an inner room, apparently, for the door shut softly, as if in echo to his entrance.

Anthea was not facing the door, and the shutting of the other one buried the slight noise of his advance. He came quietly to within a few yards of her, and said very clearly:

"Anthea!"

She turned with a sudden start, and looked at him.

Silence.

And then, with no undue haste in her movements, no cessation of her usual dignity, she walked across the room, and laid her hand upon the bell. But she did not press it. She turned towards her husband with a gesture of haughty inquiry. Had he followed her and taken her in his arms and mastered her in passion, it would have been well with both of them; but he was very much a gentleman, and his own pride was once again taking fire.

"Stay, Anthea," he said fiercely; "what on earth do you mean by treating me like this?"

Her lips were white with scorn, and her eyelids lowered as she said coldly:

"How *dare* you come to me like this and force your way in?"

"Dare—I am your husband," he retorted hotly.

Anger flashed into her face.

"*You*—and after what I have seen to-day you dare to urge that plea."

"After what you have seen," he repeated blankly. "Come, Anthea, stop this raging imbecility, and explain yourself."

"Explanation is quite unnecessary," her voice was icy. "I must ask you to go at once. I cannot conceive how you managed to summon up enough impudence to come here: you used at least to be a gentleman—in outward manners, anyway."

It was Garston's turn to become white, and wild with passion.

"Impudence?" he repeated. "Anthea, have you taken leave of your senses, that you talk like this?" She smiled derisively. "I came because, like the fool I have been, but never will be again, I thought we might come to an understanding. I've had enough of this pseudo-husband state—and I came to hear you sing." Suddenly he forgot his anger. "Oh! Anthea, you sing divinely; you have made your voice an absolutely perfect thing."

Never a flicker of feeling, never a gleam over the cold scornful face and the steadily lowered lids. She stood there, one hand stretched out still in readiness to press the bell, nor did his praise of her voice please her in the least.

"Indeed? And now please go."

She spoke almost indifferently.

Garston came one step nearer, and rested his hand

on the table. He was in evening dress, and evening dress always suited him particularly well.

He spoke slowly and deliberately:

"By the living Lord, Anthea, this *is* the end as far as I am concerned. I will never seek you again, nor come even if you send for me. I never want to see your face again, and I curse the hour when I first met you."

Once more he waited, but she gave no sign, and he turned away and left her.

Anthea stood still, her eyes fixed upon the spot where he had stood. Had she made a mistake, had her eyes and ears deceived her?

He did not behave as if he were guilty of any enormity.

Perhaps she ought at least to—but she thought no further. She crossed the room quickly and opened the door; the long luxurious hall was empty; of course, she ought to have sent a message down, but she did not think of that.

She came back into her room, and tried to shut the door, but her strength seemed suddenly to leave her, and it swung ajar. She sank down rather breathlessly on to a chair.

She heard quick steps coming; was it Herrick returning? No, it was only her maid Année, for a second after she heard her voice speaking to a waiter.

"Monsieur gone, Mr. Evans?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," came the answer; "just gone, in a black rage, too, by the look of him."

"Monsieur is an angel," replied Année quickly; "to

see him with the child when we lived together in England was enough to show any woman that—my lady excepted."

"Well, he didn't look like an angel this time," said Evans with a grin on his face.

"So my lady has been cold," said Année. "I saw him before the singing to-night, his car came up by ours as we waited, and the child was there, looking like a little angel, and grown—oh, how she is grown—and Monsieur takes care of her like a mother. He wraps a cloak round her, *nom de dieu,* like any woman. I saw him do it as we waited."

"Ah, yes, and I saw them in the theatre this evening," went on the man; "the child was taken home by the nurse—well, she sang wonderful."

"She always does," agreed Année; "and she's a good mistress. But the poor little thing wants a mother. My lady will have her here to-morrow. . . . But I must get my lady's room ready. Good-night, Mr. Evans," and the voices died away.

Anthea rose to her feet, went calmly across the room, and sat down in a luxurious chair by the writing table; when Année, who had been with her ever since she had been married, came in, she found Anthea calmly writing a note.

"Ah, Année, put everything ready," she said evenly, and without looking up; "I shall be some time in here. You can have a few sandwiches and a glass of wine put on the dressing-table, and then that will do."

"Very well, madam," answered Année rather doubt-

fully; "but surely you are tired after your singing to-night?"

"No, only wide awake," Anthea said gently. "Année, did you see Miss Julia with Mr. Garston?"

"Yes," said Année eagerly, "she was in the car just by ours, and she was looking like a little angel. Oh, madam, hasn't she grown?"

"It would be strange if she had not," said Anthea, gravely; "and now, good-night, Année, I'm busy."

And so Année rather reluctantly withdrew. She was really fond of Anthea, and had an heroic admiration for the great Charles Garston, who always treated his dependents well. Besides, she secretly pitied him: "my lady was so cold."

She shut the door quietly, and went. . . .

So that, then, was the explanation!

It was their child, their dumb child to whom he had been speaking.

In a flash with her clear quick brain Anthea understood.

He had brought the child with him to hear her sing, as a peace offering. He had meant Julia to link them together.

He had understood her visit to the child months ago.

But it was too late. She had sent him away, and he had sworn never to come again.

She knew that come death or life Herrick would keep that vow.

Ah—she might have known that he would not have flaunted a strange woman in her face like that! The very fact of his presence in America ought to have

explained his errand. And then, for the first time, she acknowledged to herself that she had been mad with jealousy, and it had distorted all her mind.

Jealousy because she loved him, loved him for the first time in all her unhappy successful life.

He had told her she had sung wonderfully, and she had not cared for his praise, and now she knew the reason.

She wanted him to praise her beauty, to kiss her wonderful eyes, to speak of their power over him, of their mysterious meaning.

What cared she for her voice? She was no longer a singer—but a woman who wanted to be loved.

But it was too late—and her pride still lived within her.

She sat on in the luxurious room until the night grew old, and the day had dawned.

CHAPTER XXVII

Dull to myself.
—HERRICK.

AUSTIN BALTURIN was strolling leisurely along the pathway, meditating a late morning call upon Anthea.

He had seen her husband at the concert, he had heard of his call on her at the hotel, and he wanted to see how she bore herself.

Were the two going to become reconciled? At the thought a peculiar feeling of dissatisfaction made itself felt in his restless mind.

If they were, he could no longer continue his research work, and he was finding it all-absorbing. A car drawing up by him attracted his attention, and he saw Garston leaning forward to speak to him.

"Hullo, Balturin; you turn up like a bad penny. You were asking me about my daughter, let me introduce you to her. Julia, dear, this is Mr. Balturin, an old friend of mine and of your mother."

Balturin raised his hat, and took the little hand, which Julia held out to him with childish courtesy, and said:

"Miss Julia, I am delighted to see you. Where are you going now?"

Garston spoke rather hurriedly to save an explana-

tion, but Julia had smiled up into Balturin's face so sweetly that he was quite charmed.

"We are going straight to our steamer, and we haven't a minute to spare. We're going back to England, you know; we came to America simply to hear mother sing."

"And did you think mother's singing worth coming to hear across all that water?" Balturin went on.

Julia nodded vigorously, and Balturin thought she was only shy, not speechless. The car passed on out of sight.

Balturin walked on. Garston had looked rather pale, he thought. What a lovely child the little one was—and what idle rubbish people had talked! Of course, Garston's engagements took him back to England, and hers kept her in America; but still it was a very flying visit, and surely Garston was going to give himself some holiday. No—the car had gone down to the docks, not towards the hotel. Well, he would see Mrs. Garston and judge from her bearing.

But Anthea had left New York by an early morning train.

He heard from a newspaper man that she had gone away to rest, but for the moment no one knew where.

Balturin was baffled, but still there was quite a nice interesting amount of gossip to pick up that day, and he picked it up, sifted it out, and packed it away into the recesses of his mental library.

Garston had stopped to speak to Balturin of set purpose.

He knew that he was a centre for gossip, and if he

once saw Julia in her baby beauty, the idle tales would be contradicted; for, though the father had laughed at them, they had hurt him. It was dreadful to think of his little child being discussed coarsely and callously by a brutal minded public.

He had hoped the little conversation would go off as it had done, and Balturin was evidently quite ignorant of his child's affliction.

And so on that head it was well.

But on the other?

He had told Julia that they were going back again, and when she had asked for her mother he had taken her on his knees, saying lovingly:

"Cherry Blossom, I can't take you to mother, and I can't tell you why. You must just say to yourself: 'Daddy knows best, and loves me.' You have heard mother sing, and neither you nor I will ever forget it. And now we must go home again."

Julia had looked up at him, her dainty blue eyes big with tears, for she was still overwrought by her tremendous experience of the night before, and she had asked on her trembling little fingers:

"Doesn't mother love me then?"

And Garston, for his wife's sake and for his child's sake, had lied bravely:

"Yes, Little Poem, I am sure she does; but mother is a great singer, and is not like other people."

His child's eyes were lifted to his with a question:

"But you love me, daddy, and you are a great singer?" But he kissed her, and bade her go to Miss Raynes.

She had slipped from his lap, and had walked towards the door rather unsteadily, but she had turned before she reached it, and had rushed back to her father bursting into a passion of tears; for the stately wonderful singer of the night before had become a beauteous ideal to the little daughter, and she was filled with longing to see her mother again.

Garston understood, and could give little comfort; perhaps he was too badly in need of it himself to try to find it.

So they left the rich new country, the country without a past, but with a certain future, and went back to England. Charles Garston, never again Herrick, as he bitterly thought, arranged the future life both for himself and for his child as if he had no wife.

From Anthea came no explanation, no apology for her reception, and after a few weeks' rest at Cherry Blossom Farm, he went on his golden way of fame and riches.

But he made no new engagements, for a resolve was crystallizing within him.

When he had "worked all his songs off" he would leave the world of singing, and go away and live for his child.

For the great tenor was weary and very sad.

* * * * * * *

The glorious summer was over, a summer of sunshine and heat, more enjoyable in the remembrance than in the actuality, and autumn was well on its way.

Anthea had deliberately made her choice, her pride,

her ambition being all that was left to her of the wreck she had made of her own life.

October was over, and November had come, and the week of the two big concerts of Munro Sylvester was approaching.

Anthea had agreed to sing, and in consequence these two concerts were to be the events of the day. She laid her plans with cold deliberation, a deliberation only possible to a despair-driven woman.

Yet the action upon which she had determined was in itself perfectly legitimate and within her rights; it would cause no particular amazement, and only a little comment. It might be altogether a fiasco as regards its effect upon the man who certainly deserved punishment, and it depended altogether for its evil result upon the actions of others.

In this way Anthea drugged her conscience. She knew the world, its passions and its unreasonableness, and upon these she counted. As it happened, everything seemed to arrange itself on her side, and undoubtedly the stars in their courses fought for her.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Monstrous fancies shall
Out of hell an horror call.

—HERRICK.

IT was the day after the first concert, and Anthea was reading the papers after breakfasting. Her face was pale and slightly haggard. Without one attempt at wire-pulling, the improbable had happened.

There had been huge audiences, the gigantic theatre had been full from floor to ceiling, and, at the last moment, Madame Lavago, for whom the audience were shouting in a frenzy, had been discovered insensible in her dressing-room, and had been unable to appear.

The scene in the theatre had been one of great excitement: the whole audience had been on the verge of riot.

Then Munro Sylvester had come before the curtain, and for a few minutes it had been a "toss-up" as to whether he would be allowed to speak. If he had not been able to make himself heard, there was a possibility that the theatre would have been wrecked.

But his was a magnetic personality, and he managed to make himself heard.

The money should be given back, or tickets issued for the same seats on the morrow, where possible. Present reserved ticket holders, if their tickets clashed with the holders of the seats for the second concert, would be apportioned seats in the unreserved portions of the theatre.

Miss Argent was singing to-morrow, as they knew; if possible, he would persuade her to sing several times. She was in the town already, and he had been talking to her over the telephone, and she appeared persuadable. He trusted to their loyalty and good sense, etc.

It had been a bad moment for the man, for failure meant complete ruin; but for the moment it had been averted.

This was the gist of the news provided by the papers. Anthea read them all. The thing was assuming bigger proportions than she had anticipated.

"Insensible! Poor Madame Lavago!"

Anthea shrugged her shoulders; she knew well enough that drugs were the cause, that the woman was fast becoming a morphinomaniac, and that in the beginning Munro Sylvester had been largely responsible for her yielding to the deadly enemy influence of opiates. No—he deserved no mercy. She thought again of her mother, of her own bitter soul—a direct inheritance from a tortured mother.

She thought of her dumb child, her lost husband, all traceable, or so she thought in her morbid state of mind, to the original sin against her mother; as she sat there, a knock sounded at her door and a waiter appeared with a card, and on the card was written:

Munro Sylvester.

"Would madame see him; it was of vital importance?"

Madame thought rapidly. Yes, she *would* see him.

She rose and stood by the fireplace, a tall still figure: not a pulse beat faster, not a line of her countenance moved.

"Mr. Munro Sylvester."

He came in, walking lightly for all his height and breadth and bulk, carried well despite his sixty and more years.

A handsome man, a well-groomed man, one likely to meet defeat, or to inflict pain, with equal calm.

Just for one instant Anthea lifted her eyelids and looked at him; in that second's glance she knew him again, and she saw a strange glimpse of herself in the way he moved and held his head.

But to the concert promoter she was just the proud autocratic professional singer, upon whom his success or final ruin rested.

He bowed deeply, and Anthea slightly inclined her head; but she did not ask him to sit down, and she herself remained standing—waiting for him to speak.

"It's good of you to see me, madam, for I know it is against your rules to permit me this pleasure."

He spoke easily and glibly, and yet with no unpleasing effect.

Anthea moved her head again very slightly, and Sylvester went on smoothly:

"You have, of course, seen the papers, and know of the most unfortunate illness of Madame Lavago."

"Yes."

No more, but Anthea conveyed a certain amount of cold disdain into the word, and Sylvester understood that she knew the tragic story of poor Madame Lavago, and was probably aware of his unholy share in it. And then, what wave of memory was that that rose in his sin-packed mind? He had heard this woman sing, of course, but he had not heard her speak. But he could not trace the memory, and he went on:

"It was altogether unfortunate, but if you will sing to-night, say, three times, the audience will be more than satisfied."

"And if not?"

Anthea's cold monosyllables were not promising.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"They will probably lose their tempers, and get completely out of hand. An audience wrought up to their state of excitement is quite unaccountable for its actions; it was touch and go last night. May I ask this favor?"

"Shall you be there?" again Anthea spoke in the same cold tones.

"Oh, yes, it is not my habit to run away from danger; and I may tell you in confidence, madam, that a great deal more than appears on the surface depends upon the success of the concert to-night. I have merely called to assure myself that you will be there this evening. If you were to fail unexpectedly ——" He stopped and shrugged his shoulders again.

"You, of course, could demand compensation from me," Anthea suggested indifferently.

Munro Sylvester glanced at her quickly, a strange feeling of apprehension in his mind.

"But there is no likelihood of your doing so?" he said, quickly.

"I do not think I have ever failed to fulfil an engagement which it was in my power to perform." She bowed again, and added: "And now, Mr. Sylvester, I'm busy."

"Again—thank you. It has been more than good of you to grant me this brief business interview. Good-morning. I *may* depend upon you entirely, then?"

Once again Anthea bowed her head, this time in dismissal.

Anthea left to herself was conscious of no sensation in particular; father and daughter had met for the first time, and the daughter sincerely hoped it would be the last.

She was going to ruin him if she could; it had all worked out wonderfully well for her.

With cold callousness, Anthea made her final decision. She was not a woman to be turned away from any course she had finally decided to pursue.

It would mean the loss of a big sum of money; but that was nothing to her, and she was "safe," because she could always plead a "lost voice."

She followed exactly her usual course of procedure, as on the days when she was to sing—a little exercise, a short practice, a rest in the afternoon.

She went to her room to dress rather earlier than usual.

Her maid came in answer to the bell, and told her that Mr. Sylvester was at the telephone, and might he speak to her.

"No," said Anthea carelessly; "how tiresome the man is; go and see, Année."

Année came back looking rather flushed and indignant.

"He wants to know if you are coming for certain, madam. He says the theatre is overflowing; there is a huge queue waiting to enter, and hundreds will have to be turned away."

"And what did you say?" asked Anthea, quietly.

"I told him that you were not accustomed to being bothered like this, and that you always kept your engagements, madam. Then he asked me if I were your maid, and when I said yes, he offered me fifty pounds to hurry you up a bit, and called me 'my dear.'"

"Yes, I always keep my engagements," said Anthea half to herself; "I am sorry he was rude, Année, but I shall have no more to do with the man after this."

Année went about her work still looking indignant, and in the course of the next half-hour her mistress was ready.

Anthea was robed in a soft dull black; the whiteness of her flesh against its dusky folds was startling. Her copper-colored hair was dressed with the usual elaborate simplicity, and she wore one jewel only, a blood-red ruby, which rested on her corsage.

Anthea knew the value of dramatic setting, and she

was always most careful to give full value to every detail of her appearance.

Année deftly draped a soft silk cloak over the stately figure, and Anthea went to the door. In a few minutes they were gliding through the traffic towards the theatre.

The stage entrance was in another street, and Année caught sight of a huge surging crowd round the doors of the unreserved seats. She shuddered, thinking to herself: "I don't like American crowds. Just supposing my lady's voice went—what would happen?"

Anthea, too, had seen the crowd, but she was beyond caring. If her own safety were involved, so much the better: she was tired of all things, tired of her success, her powers, her life.

It was the old cry over again: "all, all is vanity."

Her dressing-room was comfortable enough, and she sat down to wait. An extraordinary feeling of detachment came over her; she could hear the murmur of many voices, and the roar from the streets outside.

Then Munro Sylvester came to her door.

"Surely it is not time yet," she said, carelessly rising to her feet, and ignoring the manager's deep bow.

"I have taken the liberty of transposing the order of the songs," he said, speaking with a gay lightness in his voice; "the crowd is getting so impatient that it will really be wiser not to keep it waiting. I am going to announce that you sing three times, is not that so, madam?"

Anthea spoke over her shoulder:

"You may *announce* it."

The singer walked slowly towards the stage; she never suffered from stage fright nowadays, and to-day her thoughts were busy with the past. She wondered at what moment it had been that her mother's voice gave way, in what manner had the man, walking so trimly just before her, dismissed her. He would do it with easy cruelty and a bow.

"Now, madam ——"

Sylvester led her on to the stage.

Cheer after cheer, wild and fierce; a sense of suppressed passion in the air, of electricity.

Father and daughter—side by side they stood, but only the daughter in all the world knew of the relationship, and it was no part of her scheme to reveal it.

Munro Sylvester raised his hand, and there was momentary silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen,—I need not introduce Madame Argent to you—you know her too well for that. She has promised to sing to you three times—and, after I have told you this, I know you will forgive me the unavoidable misfortune of yesterday."

Once more shouts, cheers, stamping of feet, waving of hats and handkerchiefs.

Then a complete silence, a death-like silence, for the tall and beautiful prima donna had, in her turn, held up her hand.

There she stood, tall and beautiful, a very striking figure in her dusky robe of black; her eyes were widely open, and there was no touch of color in her cheeks.

Her voice was clear and audible in the remotest

corner of that packed building, but those who heard it said afterwards that it sounded cruel and cold, and cutting as sharp steel.

"Ladies and gentlemen,—I must beg you to excuse me. I shall not sing to you to-night."

She bowed, and was gone before any one—least of all Munro Sylvester—had realized her intention.

Année was waiting for her in the wings, and flung the cloak round her. In less than a minute she was in her car, which she had ordered to wait for her at the stage entrance, and was being driven away accompanied by a very frightened maid.

And in the theatre?

An ominous silence—to Sylvester it seemed to last for ages—and then the storm broke.

The air was filled with yells and curses, shrieks of rage, and women's and children's cries of terror.

The police, and there were many of them, saw what was about to happen, but they were literally powerless against the demons whom Anthea had let loose: the attendants rushed to the emergency doors and flung them open.

The audience was standing. Then the air became thick with missiles—sticks, hats, oranges, apples. Sylvester was standing alone on the stage, bowing ironically to the yelling multitude. There was a sound of crashing wood, and various barricades gave way; the multitude seemed to sweep forward over the footlights and on to the stage.

The man was down, scrambled once more to his feet, and would have been down again, but for a man

in the habit of a monk who flung his arms round him, and rushed him down the wings, and, with the help of another man, managed to shut a door between themselves and the ravening crowd.

Their escape would not have been possible had not some other force come to their aid.

From within the pandemonium arose an awful cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

And then those who had sought to destroy now turned to flee.

Who can describe such a scene, or the awful effect of terror seizing upon a passion-demented mob?

Wild fighting, fearful tramplings, and out through the wide emergency doors hurtled the crowd, and over them rolled huge volumes of smoke.

The police and the fire brigades were on the scene simultaneously.

Out the crowd came, pouring from the theatre, strong active men using their strength to trample down the weaker, women forgetting to protect their children, young men and women forgetting to help their parents.

The one and only thought in the midst of all was "The open air and safety. Oh, just to get away from the burning hell within."

Flames began to shoot out from windows and doorways.

A cordon of police was drawn round the building, and a tremendous fight began between men and their eternal enemy and servant—fire.

A short quick fight—and a tremendous downpour of rain, and the flames were beaten out.

There were many injuries, some serious, some less so—but the death roll was mercifully much smaller than would have been thought possible—an old woman who died of heart failure, a young man who was trampled to death, and a child who had been flung over the stairway by one frantic parent to another. The child had been caught in the father's arms, but the head had struck an iron support, and the child was dead.

But these details were only learned later.

In this manner Anthea Argent attained her second heart's desire.

CHAPTER XXIX

With the sins of all my youth.

—HERRICK.

THE man in the ecclesiastical habit held the drooping figure of the elderly concert manager, and looked across to the other man who had come to the rescue. He was in evening dress, very immaculate, despite the last rush.

"We'll get him out to my rooms," said Balturin; "I know this place, and with luck we ought to be able to get a car."

Sylvester, who seemed half stunned, tried to straighten himself.

The first man passed his arm round the drooping figure, and said:

"Didn't see it was you, Balturin—you lead the way; I'm strong enough to do the work here."

"Right," answered Balturin, leading the way out.

Fortune was still with the three, for an empty taxi-cab was driving past.

Sylvester was hardly able to walk, for he had been knocked about rather badly before he was rescued, and with some difficulty the two got him into the car.

Balturin gave the address of his rooms, and looked across to the man in ecclesiastical garb, saying easily:

"Thought it was a suffragette who had come to the rescue. Your habit looked uncommonly fetching, Arbuthnot."

"Do you think he's hurt?" said Arbuthnot, gravely.

"Oh, a dose of brandy will bring him round," answered Balturin, carelessly; "it's no good asking if you carry any with you."

"I'm afraid things will be in a bad state behind us," said Arbuthnot.

Balturin shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, we are well out of it. I hope Mrs. Garston will reach her hotel safely. She's staying at the Astoria."

Arbuthnot did not answer, but his face grew colder and sterner.

Then the car pulled up, and with the help of a porter they guided Sylvester's heavy feet. In a few minutes they were in Balturin's suite of rooms.

"A doctor," suggested Balturin.

"No," said Sylvester himself, "I'm all right; give me a dose of brandy."

Balturin looked at Arbuthnot.

"No, I think he's all right," said the other gravely; "he's only been knocked about a bit, and bed and brandy will put him straight."

Balturin rang for brandy, and the two younger men watched the elder as he sipped it slowly.

After a few moments the dazed expression began to

disappear from his face, and the tension to relax from his limbs. He sat back in the lounge in a more natural position, and when they saw this the two men turned away and spoke to one another in low voices.

"How did you manage to be there, Arbuthnot?" asked Balturin, lighting a cigarette.

"I am going back to England next week," said Arbuthnot, "and I was giving myself a treat before I leave. I have not heard Mrs. Garston since she returned to the concert platform."

"You were disappointed, it seems," said Balturin, sarcastically; "I wonder what the deuce made her clear out like that."

"I suppose she felt ill—she could not have done it for any other reason," returned Arbuthnot sternly.

Then Sylvester spoke rather hoarsely:

"I believe it was a mere whim; she was perfectly well a second before; her manner to me was always unpleasant."

"Ah—er—had she ——" began Balturin suavely, for he knew the man before him.

"Never spoke to her except about this concert," said Sylvester, bitterly, "nor had any dealings whatever with her, but she's done the trick—I am ruined." And the gray shade which had lifted for a moment under the influence of the brandy settled down again on his face.

"As bad as that?" said Balturin kindly.

"Yes, I shall clear out to-night. Oh, I don't mean run away," he added, standing up; "my creditors will know where to find me. But this will be the last show

as far as I am concerned. I dare not face any more music. I've had a long rope. But I'll make this woman pay."

"She will, of course, pay her liabilities," said Balturin, coldly.

"And more too," snarled Sylvester, fiercely. "She did it to ruin me."

"I think that quite unlikely," said Arbuthnot, very coldly; "Mrs. Garston is a woman of honor."

"Still she shall pay," reiterated Sylvester, with a very unpleasant note in his voice.

"Oh, she'll pay fast enough," said Balturin, looking at the man before him. "But you would have no case. You know there used to be something queer about Miss Argent's voice; it used to disappear altogether, I believe. I know in the past she's had to cut her engagements. I came upon an old woman the other day who had seen her as a girl, and she said the voice came and went, and, of course, she would plead that. And if she felt her voice queer no one would blame her for not using it. This old woman said her mother was like it before her."

Sylvester staggered backwards. Ah, that was the memory, years of sin and license, years of callous desertions and vice rolled away! He sat down, and took another pull at the brandy.

"I expect you're right," he said. "No, I shouldn't gain anything; she'll pay her penalties, of course."

"And you'll take no further action."

There was just a touch of threatening in Balturin's voice, and Arbuthnot glanced at him quickly.

"No—I'll be off: thank you for your kindly help," and Sylvester held out his hand.

Arbuthnot shook it gravely, but in no way warmly; something about this elderly man repelled him.

Sylvester turned to offer his hand to Balturin, but the latter had gone to the telephone, and from there went to the door.

"There's a car for you," he said carelessly; "sure you feel all right?"

"Quite, thanks."

Sylvester understood: he did not offer his hand again, and went out quite steadily. But he carried with him a fear which effectually bound his hands as regards taking action against Anthea.

Balturin came up to the fire, and motioned to Arbuthnot to sit down again.

"That man's a cur," he said rather shortly. "I'm sorry, really, that we didn't leave him to be trampled on. I'm not very particular, Arbuthnot, and I certainly shouldn't care to go to confession to you, but I draw the line somewhere. That man's responsible for more tragedies than I should care to be."

"Do you think, then, that Mrs. Garston's action was premeditated?" asked Arbuthnot very gravely.

Balturin laughed shortly.

"You've met Anthea the inscrutable. Who can say? It may have been her voice, but it sounded all right when she spoke. Perhaps she didn't care to be associated with a man like that. I confess I was surprised to hear that she was going to sing for him."

"I am thinking of the casualties that we left behind

us, of the burning theatre and broken limbs," said Arbuthnot; "if it was the failure of her voice she is only to be pitied, of course; but otherwise ——" He made a gesture.

Balturin laughed.

"Oh, she won't mind. She *is* only voice, you know. Really, I don't fancy she loves any one but herself, and that self only as a sort of human gramophone. I think if any woman could bear up under the knowledge that she was either indirectly or directly responsible for various injuries to others, Mistress Anthea would be that woman."

Arbuthnot looked at him sternly, and said with cold severity:

"Mrs. Garston is a strange woman, but you would make her inhuman. Good-night, Balturin; I shall be leaving for home in a day or so."

Balturin looked at him with one of his keen glances.

"Going to stick to the habit?" he asked, carelessly.

"I don't know," the clergyman answered, rather absently.

Balturin watched him for a moment, and then said:

"I met an old friend of yours the other day, Mrs. de Thuson. She used to be Alys Mayder, you know; she's a widow now, and is at home again with Sir Lewis."

"And how is Sir Lewis?" asked Arbuthnot.

"Oh, more powerful than ever; he's sure of his peerage this time, and really he uses his influence very wisely."

Arbuthnot said good-night, and went.

Balturin, left to himself, was rather thoughtful.

"He ought to chuck that habit," he said to himself, "and marry Alys and be made a bishop. He would do heaps more good than gallivanting about in a cassock. I hope I've done him a good turn by suggesting it to him; for, of course, he understood."

CHAPTER XXX

Pale care, avaunt!

—HERRICK.

THE Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot walked rather slowly through the crowded streets, thinking deeply.

More than ten years had passed since his brief wooing of Anthea had taken place, and he, good Christian gentleman as he was, had never quite forgiven her.

He could have forgiven her refusal, but he always felt sore at the thought that Anthea had allowed him to propose to her when she was actually married. It had not been Anthea's fault, but he had forgotten this, and only remembered the soreness. He had led a busy and most self-denying existence, but he was feeling the restrictions of this life. He had begun to think that his "habit" fettered his usefulness, and that at the end of the seven years he would not renew his vow.

Some strange remnant of a very sincere love for Anthea had driven him from the world, and that remnant had been with him ever since he had left her. Because of this, his wrath against her seemingly wanton action was gathering strength.

All his instincts told him that nothing had ailed her;

just for a whim this tragedy had happened. Sylvester probably deserved to be ruined, but still, who was Anthea to ruin him? And then very likely many injuries had been done.

Because of Anthea he had given up all hope of riches and honor in the world, and quite unconsciously he put this in the balance against her.

Pah—how noisy the streets were! He turned into a quiet one, in which at the moment there were no pedestrians.

Two figures appeared at the end of the block—a man and a woman; the woman was carrying the figure of a sleeping child. The man spoke urgently, and Arbuthnot heard the words:

"Let me carry Sibbie, she's too heavy for you."

"No, no, John," the woman said, and her voice was strangely still; "you might wake her, and she ought to sleep. Besides, we're nearly home now."

Arbuthnot recognized the couple now; he was a clerk in a dry-goods store, and was a respectable, hard-working young fellow, extremely proud of his little home, his young pretty wife, and their only child, a little girl of five. Arbuthnot waited for them to approach to wish them good-night.

The man spoke again: "Effie, Effie, can't you understand? Didn't you hear what the doctor said?"

His wife held the sleeping child nearer, and answered:

"Hurry, John. Sibbie sleeps so soundly, and she's getting cold, poor child. It was too bad for her to be disappointed. Sibbie, little one."

She kissed the cold face, standing still to do so, and said:

"Oh, John, she's cold, and I've lost my wrap."

The man stood still, and Arbuthnot saw him fling his hands out with a piteous gesture. Thinking there was something badly wrong, he strode up to the couple, and asked:

"Bowers, what is wrong?"

"Oh!" a gasp of relief came into the poor fellow's shaking voice; "oh, it's you, Father Cecil, can't you see?" And he broke down utterly.

Mrs. Bowers gave him a curious glance of impatience:

"John, you'll wake Sibbie, and I want to get her in bed first. Father Cecil, you go first and help John; we were in the theatre, you know, and he's a bit upset. Sibbie might have been hurt, but she's only asleep."

"Shall I fetch a doctor?" asked Arbuthnot.

"No, no," and the mother's voice suddenly shrilled out wildly. "Go up first."

They were just by their own dwelling, and Arbuthnot went in first.

Three rooms were their home, but three rooms furnished with simple pride and care.

The wife pushed past Arbuthnot at the door, and hurried into the bedroom with the child.

"I'll put her to bed quick," she said; "she'll be warm between the blankets."

"Go and help," said the priest to the somewhat weak-looking young man. "She must not be left alone; I will speak to her presently."

The two went in, but in a little while the mother came back, still holding the child, and crouched down before the gas stove, muttering to herself:

"Sibbie's cold; so cold, but sleeping."

"Mrs. Bowers," said Arbuthnot suddenly, "let Sibbie sleep on this settee, while you make me a cup of tea."

Mrs. Bowers gave a scared look round the room, at her husband sitting in a chair, his face hidden in his hands, at the powerful strong-looking priest looking down at her with very pitiful eyes, and she yielded.

She placed the still child on the settee, covered her with rugs, shaded the little face from the glare of the gas, and in a desultory fashion set about making tea.

John Bowers looked up appealingly into Arbuthnot's pale face.

"Tell her, sir," he gasped, "doctor said she *must* be made to understand, or she'd go mad."

Arbuthnot was a man of wide experience, and he saw that the advice was right.

She must be made to understand, and, if possible, to weep.

He went up to Mrs. Bowers, and, taking her hard toil-stained hands in his, compelled her to look up at him. He laid aside his doctrinal correctness, his ecclesiastical dogma, and his orderly theology, and spoke to her according to her hymn book faith and picture post-card belief—poor soul!

"Effie, listen to me: you and John took Sibbie to hear the great singer to-night."

Effie's eyes wandered from his face to the figure of her child, and then back again.

"Yes," she muttered; "Sibbie loves singing and music, and it was her birthday treat. Sibbie's five to-day."

"Effie," the priest's voice was tenderly solemn, "Sibbie did not hear the singer to-night here, but she now hears greater, lovelier music than she ever dreamed of, for Sibbie is an angel. God wanted her to hear His music forevermore."

Effie pulled his hands away, staggered over to the settee, fell upon her knees by the child, and pushed away the coverings.

She drew her to her bosom, rocking her in anguish; but no tremble of the eyelids answered to the mother's wild appeal.

"Sibbie, Sibbie, it's *mother* calling."

Then she uttered a wild cry.

"John, John, come to me. Sibbie is dead, dead, dead!"

The husband's arms were round her, and there came a deep sob of anguish; together the young couple wept over their dead child.

The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot left the room quietly, hailed a taxi as soon as he reached the street, and gave the address of the hotel at which Anthea was staying.

For her soul's salvation, if she had done this on purpose, she must see the wreck her action had brought upon two innocent people.

It was a very stern unyielding judge who had al-

ready condemned who sought the great singer that night.

Ten o'clock—the hour struck out in little silver bells.

The big room was dimly lighted, and the coal fire glowed a red-hot mass of heat.

Anthea sat very still before it, as she had sat since she had returned from the theatre. She had flung off her cloak, and given orders that she should be undisturbed.

Then she rested very quietly in the ultra luxurious chair. Her head leaned against the dull blue cushions, her wonderful eyes looked straight into the glowing heart of the fire, and her long white hands were folded on her knees.

As the clock struck, the ten little bells echoed through the big room, and Anthea shifted her position slightly.

Her object was attained: her father was a ruined man—perhaps physically injured, for Anthea's quick ears had caught the rising of the howl of anger as she passed from the theatre.

What *had* happened?

She could have found out at once, for all the modern means of communication were within the room, but within that still, quiet, apparently heedless figure a great and awful dread was growing.

What *had* happened?

Yes—her second ambition was attained.

Ah, she might have known, she might have known. Her first attainment had been bitter to the taste, and what was this—what was this?

What had happened?

No—she dare not inquire. Supposing some one had been injured, some one of the huge crowd who had come to worship her.

Had she only sat there for one hour? Or was it one whole eternity?

No, she would not go to her room.

She would wait: perhaps one of her many acquaintances would come; perhaps Balturin, the only one of the world who approached the realm of friendship. Anthea had no women friends; she might have had lovers of both sexes by the score; but she would not have them, and she was now alone.

What had she done?

She had unlocked the flood gates—and to what height had the waters risen?

* * * * * * *

The tall priest in the monk's habit demanded to see Mrs. Garston.

Mrs. Garston was invisible, but he could see her maid.

He must see Mrs. Garston: it was a matter of life and death.

Then his name was taken in to the woman sitting in silence before the fire.

"Yes, she would see him if it were a matter of great importance."

A few minutes later the tall severe figure in the mediæval garb stood at the door, and was announced.

"The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot."

Anthea rose slowly to her feet, and stood as he came across the room towards her.

She was so perfectly calm, so absolutely self-possessed that Arbuthnot felt for one second at a loss; then the memory of the scene which he had just witnessed came back again, and he stood before her, but, refusing the hand she held out, bowed with rigid severity.

Anthea gave him one fleeting glance.

He had grown older, was much sterner, much more powerful looking, but otherwise the same very good man that he had always been.

"How do you do?" she said calmly; "what can I do for you?"

"I have come to see you upon a matter of life and death," he answered.

A sudden terror passed over Anthea's face.

"No," he said, answering the unspoken question, "it is not a personal matter in the sense of being concerned with your own people."

Anthea stepped back, and looked at him in some surprise.

"Please explain," she commanded, coldly.

"And yet it is a matter of life and death."

The priest's voice was full of authority, and he came a step nearer.

"Listen and answer. Why did you not sing to-night?"

His voice of stern command brought back the nameless terrors that had been hovering about her soul for

the last hour, and, looking full at him, she said breathless:

"What has happened?"

"This has happened." He stood before her as a judge. "The theatre is burnt down, and many are injured. The manager—whom I and Balturin by good luck were able to save from being kicked to death—is ruined. How many are dead, I do not know; no figures are available yet—but at least one home is desolate. Why did you not sing?"

Anthea had never moved; she was looking up at him with strange wild eyes.

"I did not choose to sing. I acted deliberately."

Arbuthnot leaned forward, and put a heavy hand upon her shoulder.

"You may have reasons behind your words. You have not lied to me. I said it was a matter of life and death, and the life is the life of your soul. You must come with me to see your handiwork."

Some strange power in the man, some unseen force—some influence emanating from the struggle that was being fought out between the emissaries of good and evil in her soul—was upon Anthea.

She lifted her cloak from the chair on to which she had flung it an hour or so ago, and said quietly:

"Very well, I will come."

They two went out together.

As they waited in the hall for a taxi, one or two interested glances were cast at them.

Already the story of the night's disaster was spreading like wildfire over the city.

In silence the strange ill-assorted couple, who had met again so unexpectedly, were whirled through the streets.

Arbuthnot told himself that this woman must see her victim, her soul must be roused from its callous state. It was his duty to chastise the dumb conscience into life, to torture it into activity.

Neither spoke.

Anthea sat with the cloak around her, held very closely so, her eyes looking straight before her, her head slightly leaning back against the cushions.

And so they reached the block which Arbuthnot had left a little while before.

CHAPTER XXXI

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet spirit, comfort me!

—HERRICK.

UP the steep stairway walked the man in monkish garb, and after him came the prima donna, stepping noiselessly in her satin slippers.

At the door of the little home the man paused, knocked, and, turning the handle, went in without waiting for an invitation. Anthea followed.

Everything was much as he had left it half an hour before, excepting that the father was sitting on a chair by the little table, on which the supper had been laid out so gaily by the young wife and mother before setting forth for the concert.

His head was resting on his arms, and his shoulders gave an occasional heave; otherwise he was quite still.

By the settee the mother crouched. Her tears were dry, and she was rocking herself slightly to and fro. She held one little hand of the child in hers, and every now and then she kissed it.

Neither turned at the gentle opening and shutting of the door; perhaps they did not hear it. The priest stood aside, and Anthea came a few steps forward, and stood by the table, opposite to the father.

She stood with the cloak falling from her shoulders, one long-fingered hand resting lightly on the table.

Arbuthnot crossed the room, and took his place by the settee.

Anthea's eyes, very widely open, looked round the room.

She saw the father, she saw the mother—and then she saw the still figure of the child.

Sibbie was a pretty child; her hair was a warm chestnut brown, and grew in little ringlets round the face. There was a haunting likeness to her own child Julia, or so Anthea for a moment fancied.

Arbuthnot stood looking at Anthea, waiting for some sign from her; there was no ruth in his gaze.

He was very stern, and he was condemning both sin and sinner.

Anthea gazed at the child; and then she slowly lifted her eyes, and met the sternness and condemnation in the face of her accuser.

Her face remained unchanged; the slight habitual color had deserted it as she had mounted the stairs, but into the strange eyes there sprang a look which never left them, for, as she met Arbuthnot's gaze—in that moment Anthea tasted the bitterness of hell-fire—she saw what she had done.

And this is why the flames of hell are everlasting, for the taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is *never* forgotten.

She did not speak nor move, but her eyes went to the face of the dead child, and the silence in the room remained unbroken.

Then the poor young father looked up, and saw Anthea and Arbuthnot.

Shaking all over, he stood up, but he did not wonder at her presence, he was too dulled with pain to wonder; but he stumbled over to his wife and touched her.

"Effie, here's the singer come to help us."

Effie turned her head, saw Anthea, and sprang to her feet, standing at bay before her child.

Arbuthnot spoke in grave and measured tones.

"Miss Argent has come to help you: she knows she is the unhappy cause, however unintentionally, of your great loss, and I have brought her with me."

Effie was a commonplace little woman enough in every-day life, but now she was a fierce mother creature bereft of her young.

She spoke hoarsely and sullenly.

"We don't want her; what's the use of her coming here? Sibbie would have liked to see her, but Sibbie's ——" Effie stopped abruptly.

The father wound his arm round his wife, and said brokenly:

"The child was set on you, miss: that's what Effie means."

Still Anthea did not speak, for she could not.

Then Effie spoke again, fiercely, half-demented as she was.

"There's one thing you can do; she can't hear you, but perhaps she is not so far away yet. You didn't sing, and she was killed; now sing to her here, and perhaps she'll come back again for a minute. She'll have her wish anyway, my little Sibbie."

She made a fierce movement of command towards Anthea, and then fell on her knees by the child, and clasped her still form in her arms.

"Sibbie, Sibbie, come back and listen. She'll sing now, if she wouldn't then."

She turned again to Anthea with a gesture of passionate anguish.

Anthea came slowly from the table where she had been standing, walked very steadily to the settee, and stood for a moment on the other side, looking down at the kneeling mother and the still cold child.

Then she knelt down and began to sing.

None but Anthea with her command over herself *could* have done this—but none but Anthea knew what it cost her.

Hours of physical torture would have been easier to bear; it would have been far less difficult to have faced the angry mob herself, but she gave no outward sign, and her voice, glorious as an angel's, pure yet passionate, sounded in that silent chamber of death:

Sorrow and care may meet,
The tempest cloud may low'r,
The surge of sin may beat
Upon earth's troubled shore.
God doth His own in safety keep,
He giveth His beloved sleep.

The din of war may roll
With all her raging flight;
Grief may oppress the soul,
Throughout the weary night.
God doth His own in safety keep,
He giveth His beloved sleep.

In childhood's winsome page,
In manhood's joyous bloom,
In feebleness and age,
In death's dark gathering gloom,
God doth His own in safety keep,
He giveth His beloved sleep.

Effie stumbled to her feet, and staggered towards her husband, for she was beginning to think of him, poor child.

He clasped her to him with tender love, the tears raining down his cheeks; Effie began to cry again, softly and sadly and very bitterly, but no longer with wild passion.

The balance had gone down on the side of sanity for the bereaved mother.

The Rev. Cecil Arbuthnot still stood with folded arms, but the stern and merciless judge had gone, and his eyes were dreamy with memory and tender with the unutterable beauty of the kneeling singer's voice.

Silence—but the air seemed full of melody, waves of sound fell in divine cadence one after another.

The child was dead: not all her singing, not all her genius could call back again the young soul which by her action she had sent forth on its eternal journey.

Anthea never moved, the cold still features never altered; she was almost as motionless as the child upon whose sleeping countenance her strange eyes were looking.

Then once more she sang—and the sadness, though still pulsing through the death chamber, was caught up and transformed into a pæan of glorious triumph:

I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And that He shall stand at the latter day
upon the earth,
And tho' worms destroy the body,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God.
For now is Christ risen from the dead,
The first-fruits of them that sleep.

Once again silence.

Anthea had reached the limit of her endurance. She rose to her feet, and, moving across the room, took up her cloak which she had let fall to the ground, and went to the door.

She had spoken no word, and the parents did not hear Arbuthnot shut the door gently upon himself; but her singing seemed to remain as something actually tangible in the room, and the memory of her voice and of her wonderful presence was a perpetual delight to the humble couple.

Long afterwards, when time had healed their wound, and Sibbie had a whole stream of little brothers and sisters, Effie and her husband would tell the story of the great prima donna's gracious visit, for in this light they looked upon her sudden advent into the room where their child lay dead.

CHAPTER XXXII

When the judgment is revealed,
And that opened which was sealed,
When to Thee I have appealed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA went down the steep stairway, followed by Arbuthnot. At the foot of the stairs she turned.

"Will you tell the man to drive past the theatre, please?" she asked.

"Mrs. Garston, may I not ask you to drive home?" Arbuthnot asked earnestly. He was wondering within himself.

Had he been too merciless? Had not his judgment been premature, and was it not tinged with his old bitterness, the slight touch of jealous injury of which he had never quite rid himself?

"No," Anthea's voice trembled slightly; "no, I wish to know the extent of the damage I have done."

"You can never do that."

Once again he was the stern priest.

"Please tell him," Anthea repeated, stepping wearily into the taxi.

The night was chill, and a little fog was creeping up from the sea; but the singer, usually so solicitous of her voice, was now quite careless of any possible risks.

Arbuthnot gave the desired directions, and in about fifteen minutes the taxi had drawn up outside the ruined theatre.

A policeman came forward, and Anthea, pulling her cloak well about her face, asked:

"Can you tell me the extent of the damage done to-night, officer?"

"Well, ma'am, the theatre's done for, and pots of money gone; they say that Mr. Sylvester will be ruined."

Anthea made a gesture of impatience, and said:

"No, I mean who was hurt?"

"A good many minor injuries, ma'am, but only three killed—a man, a woman and a child. The woman, they say, had been a bad lot."

"Thank you." Anthea sank back in the car, and said to Arbuthnot:

"Please tell him to drive to the hotel. I have heard enough."

Again Arbuthnot did as he was desired, but now he was watching his companion anxiously.

She was leaning back, a strangely lovely figure in her dusky evening gown of black.

The clocks were striking midnight as the taxi drew up outside the hotel.

"Come in, please," said Anthea over her shoulder, as she passed through the doorway; "come in, I have something to say to you."

Once more Arbuthnot obeyed, and again found himself in the luxurious room.

She turned to him, her voice very weary and bitter:

"Well, are you satisfied? You have dragged me over the red hot bars of my sin; is that enough?"

Arbuthnot answered gently:

"I did it for your soul's sake. The price of sin is always a heavy one, thank God."

Anthea smiled rather strangely:

"You do not ask me if I have any plea to urge, any excuse to make."

"You *could* have none to cover it," he answered gravely; "health alone would excuse you."

"And you think it was just a whim?" she asked, resting her hand on the back of a chair.

"I fear so."

"I must leave it so, then." Anthea's voice trembled once more, and then hardened. "I do not regret the trouble I brought on the man Sylvester; it is ——"

She did not finish.

"You had no right to arrogate to yourself God's attribute of vengeance," the priest said sternly; "if he has done wrong, you have done greater."

"Have I? Now, Mr. Arbuthnot, good-night—judge me harshly, for I deserve it."

She flung her hands out with a wide gesture of misery, and then sank down in a chair.

Arbuthnot, his work over, left her. He had brought her face to face with her sin, as no other man would have had the strength to do, for she was one of those who by reason of their beauty are not condemned of man or woman.

But Arbuthnot's conscience was not altogether easy.

He was too good a man to feel quite satisfied; but of one thing he was certain. The old love was absolutely dead; he had felt no stirring of that past emotion.

When, some months later, he decided not to renew his vows of celibacy, his conscience was quite at ease.

And he made a very good husband to Alys de Thuson, the widowed and very wealthy woman who had once been Alys Mayder.

They were very happy, and although Sir Lewis considered that he ought to have Arbuthnot's influence on *his* side, Arbuthnot thought otherwise, and always stood unflinchingly for what he knew was right and true.

And so good-bye to the man who passed into Anthea's life again, and then out of it forever, for as it happened they never met afterwards, although each heard of the other as public personages, in the years that followed.

Anthea recovered herself almost immediately, and when her maid, a very sleepy one, came to her, she was her ordinary cold calm self externally. In a very little while Année was dismissed. Anthea had exercised her self-control almost to breaking point: Année's every movement had been like the touch of a clumsy hand upon a raw wound, every ministration—and the maid was very deft-handed—caused Anthea to shrink away, as from burning metal. But the maid did not perceive this: she was worried.

"I will brush my own hair to-night," Anthea said: "it is late, and you are tired."

"So must you be, madame," answered Année, quickly.

"Too tired to sleep, I'm afraid," and Anthea gave a restless movement. "Please see that there is a good fire in my room, and put the lounge chair under the small light. I shall read for a little while."

"Very well, madame." And Année went.

Anthea, utterly exhausted, finished unrobing very slowly, turned the lights out in her dressing room, and came with bare feet, velvet shod, into her own room.

Very luxurious, very rich in comfort, a hot fire burning, curtained windows, inviting bed, and absolute silence.

The prima donna walked across the room, carrying her brush and comb.

She wore a long pale purple dressing gown, and from beneath its folds the white silk nightdress gleamed. Her hair was loosened and hung down to below her waist; its rich lustre caught the gleam of the subdued light, and added to the picturesque effect of the woman's appearance.

She sat down in the low chair and, leaning slightly forward, gazed into the fire.

Its rising and falling light shone on the pale face and the strange eyes.

The brown eye and the blue—double sign of a double nature—the woman's in contradistinction to the artist's was awake, never to sleep again.

Ah—that sleeping child to whose deafened ears she had sung; the still cold hands inert forever, and the lips which should have been laughing, silent!

She knew what she had done. She had gone her way, and then the Angel of the Lord had stood before her, and by the gleam thrown by his fiery sword she had seen light; the light had shown her herself as truly guilty of bloodshed as any passion-driven wretch shuddering before the punishment of death.

An old life, a strong life and a young life gone—blasted out of the flesh by her agency. She had not meant this thing—but she had done it. . . .

Oh, that she had left Sylvester to the hands of the Lord.

It would have been enough, for now she saw that the uttermost parts of the sea were no protection—that a day of reckoning *must* come, and that even as she had been brought face to face with her soul, so also in God's good time would he have been. But Sylvester rested lightly on her mind in comparison with the other side of the tragedy; all he suffered was as nothing compared to the suffering he had inflicted; moreover, her mind had been set in one mould for so long that it was impossible to recast it.

He was a reptile, and the sooner he was deprived of all means of stinging the better. Anthea was still very clearly visioned, and it was not this at which she was staring aghast.

The child, the little child—with its strange haunting likeness to her own.

"Oh, Julia—child of my husband's love and passion, supposing it had been you, dumb little one, bearer of the burden of your mother's sins and weakness!"

She leaned back, and laid her long hands upon the arms of the chair.

Little child of hers, little blossom of the cherry trees, which had bloomed into her life: how could she ever hope now to hold her to her bosom, where forever lay the cold still figure of the dead child?

Anthea's soul rose upwards in passionate and voiceless prayer, for the first time in her life:

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O Lord."

But the stain of blood sinks deeply.

And then Anthea turned her mental vision forward to the morrow.

A lie to the world was her only course. She would plead "voice failure," and would, of course, pay the penalty; but, oh! the sickening talk, the hideous headlines, the reporters, the critics, the snapshots! The interview with her business manager! The whole dreary prospect of notoriety! The possible appearance at inquests! She shuddered at the prospect.

There was no one to whom she might turn, for she had sent her husband away. *He* at least would judge her mercifully.

Then Anthea's whole being turned towards her husband; it had been long in coming, the true woman's love; but now she knew it was worth more than all the world to her.

One by one the tears gathered in the strange attractive eyes, and fell heavily down the pale face.

And Anthea finally, although only within her soul, laid down all her weapons and knew herself—a woman.

CHAPTER XXXIII

He who plucks the sweets shall prove
Many thorns to be in love.

—HERRICK.

ANTHEA had dismissed her business manager; the interview had been difficult and the manager was annoyed. The morning had brought with it more than the anticipated troubles—the papers were simply dreadful—and a double line of officials was waiting for admittance in the hall. She refused to see any one, passing the day in her room.

On the following morning, the officials and newspaper men again called at the hotel.

She looked tired, but otherwise there was no difference in her ordinary cold calm manner. There was no indication of the deep waters which had risen and still threatened to drown her soul. She was just giving directions as to the next interview, when a card was brought to her, and she read beneath Austin Balturin's name: "Let me see you at once, please."

The first sign of a friend. Yes, she would see him.

Balturin came in almost immediately.

"How are you this morning?" he asked, kindly, after a rather formal greeting.

"Tired," answered Anthea briefly.

"I came to ask after your voice."

A tiny tinge of color crept into Anthea's pale cheeks.

Oh, these wearisome reiterations of the essential lie!

"My voice is perfectly normal this morning," she answered, quietly.

"And as it was not the night before last?" said Balturin, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and looking at her very closely.

"There could be no other reason for my refusing to sing," Anthea answered, evasively.

"No," he said, quickly. "I understand, and whatever I think I shall ask no more questions, for what is the good of being a friend if one may not be silent?"

"Thank you," Anthea's voice was gentle now.

"I've come to help you." Balturin was not quite so smoothly the man of the world as usual. "If you will allow me, I will do for you what Garston would do if he were here, answer all questions and arrange things where your manager cannot. I can see those officials down-stairs, if you will accredit me, and spare you much."

"Thank you, you are very good."

She sat down rather suddenly, and leaned her head upon her hand.

"It was your voice, then? I'm sorry to bother you, but I must be quite clear." He moved about the room, his hands still deep in his pockets.

"Yes, it was my voice," Anthea repeated, dully.

"Very well. By the way, Mrs. Garston," Balturin was dreadfully nervous; "I've seen Sylvester, and he's leaving for the Argentine in a little while. I believe he runs a lucrative business of sorts there, and you'll

hear no more of him. Let me say that had you refused to sing for him it would have been no more than he deserved, for he is one of the most loathsome ——"

"No," interrupted Anthea, gravely. "His downfall does not upset me in any way; it is ——" She stopped suddenly, and a long shudder passed over her.

"I have heard the extent of the damage done the other night," she said slowly, and then, before she could control them, two tears suddenly rolled down her cheeks, and a little sob, suppressed as quickly as it had come, broke from her lips.

It affected Balturin strangely: he gave her a very queer look; the study of humanity was a dangerous game.

"Forgive me," Anthea spoke quite simply; "I have had a bad night, and I know ——" Her voice broke off again.

He crossed the room, and stood before her rather awkwardly.

He spoke abruptly, and quite unconsciously used her Christian name for the first time.

"See here, Anthea, I'm not a good fellow, or a trained Christian like Arbuthnot, and I *know* he gave it you hot. But whatever was the real reason for your not singing, you couldn't know for certain that all—all this would happen. You might have thought it was a bit too much like playing with fire, but until you've seen the flames burst through a roof you can't *know* what it's like. It all went further than you meant, I mean than would have been thought likely. Take up the bits, patch 'em together, and go on again. If

Arbuthnot won't forgive you, and he's a type I know, the Lord will."

"It isn't that," she said quite humbly, "it isn't that: I don't care what Mr. Arbuthnot thinks. Oh, it is not that, but I have killed a child!"

She turned away in her chair as she said this, and shielded her face from his view.

He was standing just before her and looking down at her with a very queer sensation in his brain. He wheeled away, however, and once more walked across the room, saying to himself:

"Good Lord, she's a woman after all—and not only a voice."

A knock at the door, and Année came in bearing a Marconigram.

Anthea opened it rather absently, and from the other side of the room Balturin watched her. He saw a rich color suddenly flush into her cheeks, he saw the eyes suddenly glow and almost melt. She pulled a piece of paper towards her, and began to write rapidly.

Balturin was suddenly aware of a sharp pain somewhere—a real pain, not by any means an imaginary one, although it was purely mental.

"Damn!" he said to himself, and then once again, "Damn!"

Année waited to receive the message.

Anthea wrote, and then crossed it out, and took another piece of paper. The color came and went in strange fashion in her pale cheeks.

"There, Année, take that, please," she ordered quietly, and then she looked across at Balturin.

Anthea was a woman of the world, and an impulse founded on a sudden intuition prompted her to hold out the Marconigram which she had just received, to Balturin.

"From my husband," she said gravely.

He came forward, and took it from her rather roughly, and read:

"Am with you in spirit—lift up your heart.—C. G."

"That explains it," he said to himself, "she *does* love her husband after all."

Out loud he said gravely: "Yes, the English papers this morning will worry Garston. And now, Mrs. Garston, I will see all these fellows for you, and you rest."

"Thank you, if you will be so good," said Anthea wearily.

He went away, and did even more than he had offered, for without him Anthea would have fared badly. As it was, it was a seven days' wonder, and Anthea paid heavily in many ways.

When everything was settled Balturin called again.

He found her quiet, but he did not care for the look in her eyes, nor her pallor. She did not look well, and he told her so.

"You have been very good," she said, in answer.

"It was a pleasure," he answered gravely and truly.

"I have a very full season before me," she said. "I am here until after Christmas, and then I have a number of engagements on the Continent."

"You must look after your health," he said bluntly, his hands once more deep in his pockets.

"I am tired," Anthea confessed.

They were in her sitting-room, and she was giving him tea.

Anthea was looking very subdued; he could not quite tell of what she was thinking, but there was something very unusual about her.

"See here," he said abruptly, "I have one more piece of advice to give you."

"Well?"

"Chuck everything, and go home to your husband and child. He sent you that Marconigram."

Anthea moved a teacup, then she looked across at him, saying gravely:

"Mr. Balturin, you have done so much for me that I feel I owe you something. My husband cabled because he is a gentleman—and that is all."

"Nonsense," he answered roughly; "nonsense. Garston loves you. Anyway, you should go, and now I must say good-bye."

She looked at him with genuine regret.

"I am sorry," she said gently.

"Are you, Anthea?"

He was before her now, and he stooped down and lifted the long white-fingered hand to his lips.

A hot eager kiss, then he dropped the hand and went away, cursing himself and the world in general.

Human documents are tricky things with which to deal, and the study of humanity frequently brings pain with it.

But Balturin was the better for his pain, and so perhaps was Anthea, for if her early life had taught her

to distrust her brother man, these last months had taught her that a good man is not so rare a product as is supposed.

And to Arbuthnot she owed her soul's awakening.

But the burden that she carried grew heavier day by day; the thought of the childless home, of the child lying beneath the weight of earth who should have been playing on it, seemed to be crushing her.

She had never looked her age, but now certain lines began to show themselves about her rather cruel lips and strange eyes.

She kept her engagements, and every one said that she was singing better than ever. In her work the prima donna found consolation.

And so the winter came and went, and spring came with dancing feet, and laughing voice, and in all these months neither husband nor wife had written to one another. The exchange of Marconigrams had been all. Anthea felt herself too unworthy—how could she write or go to husband and child when her hands were stained with blood? She knew that in April Garston was coming to America for a short tour.

When April came she was singing in London, and she read that Charles Garston and his little daughter had taken their passage on the great vessel which was to make her maiden voyage, carrying on her bosom the world's richest men.

So he had taken the child with him!—and he must have known she was in England.

A slight weariness of voice warned her that her strength was overdone. Her doctors advised a rest

cure—one of those cures where no letters are allowed, where no papers are seen, where for as long as the patient decides he or she is practically buried alive.

It is a risky cure, and sometimes fails.

Dr. Dumfry advised it, and Anthea, feeling she was at the end of her tether, agreed.

She endured it for a few days, and then, finding the cure infinitely more painful than the disease, decided to leave.

The nursing home lies hidden away on the East Coast, and it is not far from the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIV

In short time my woes shall cease,
And Love shall crown my end with peace.

—HERRICK.

WHITE chalk cliffs to north and south, curving away into uneven headlands to the west.

A blue sea broken by little lines of breakers here and there, where the rocks, running far out to the sea, shone dark and purple beneath the shallow waters.

An April blue sky, almost unflecked by clouds, and over everything a strange solemn stillness, broken only by the voices of Nature.

The waves curled and fell very gently on the hard firm beach, the gulls called from one cliff to another, and the sky-larks sang far above in the dazzling blue.

Sea to north and south and east, and westward the open country, fields springing green and fair, and far away the hills.

A cuckoo called suddenly from a clump of trees, and its living voice floated down to the ears of the solitary figure standing upon the headland, gazing out to where the sky and sea hold each other in an everlasting embrace.

Anthea had had more than enough of the nursing home of rest; four days of complete silence had nearly

sent the famous singer distracted. In the orderly quiet of the home Anthea's burden grew heavier.

And so to-day, on the 17th of April, she had left, and she had come out upon the cliffs to decide a question. She was going back to London, but she had chosen to walk to the little station; she wanted the real silence of Nature, as against the forced silence of the home.

High overhead the sun shone, and Anthea—not as a rule a Nature lover—understood that the world was "very good."

For four days she had received no letters and read no papers, and it seemed as if she were beginning life again. Her thoughts went out over the waters, away to the land where the child was sleeping. The flowers would be springing again over its little grave. Then in thought her vision followed the gallant ship in its pride of being, breaking the waves, and tearing through the waters. It carried her husband and child.

Gently the wind fanned her. She took off her hat, and the breeze played over the copper-colored hair, glowing with a rare lustre in the sunlight. The strange eyes looked out over the sea very wistfully, for her heart was hungry for love of man and child.

Slowly her determination came to her, and to determine with Anthea was to perform.

She would go down to Cherry Blossom Farm, and await the return of husband and daughter.

Garston's tour was to be only a very short one, and a month's rest under the cherry trees would bring back her strength. They would blossom again, and under

their dainty flower-laden boughs Garston, who was so much affected by external beauty, would forgive her, and take her back again.

She thought of Balturin's advice.

"Pick up the bits and patch them together again."

Well, she would try, and Anthea laid her pride down forever on the sunny white cliffs.

Over the sunlit world a shadow crept, into the air there came a chill, and a bitter soughing wind began to blow. The birds ceased to sing, the larks dropped suddenly to earth, and the very flowers themselves drooped their heads and folded their petals as at the coming of the night. A gloom was falling over the world; the great sun-god was veiling his face.

One strange thrill of superstitious awe invaded Anthea's being—and then she understood. She had lost count of time during that horrible rest cure, and, of course, this was the 17th of April, the day of the eclipse.

Dimmer and dimmer grew the light, and the dusk seemed to come forth from the earth itself. The sun turned blood-red, and then pale orange as the shadow covered its glory. In the strange silence that seemed to be part of the gathering gloom, the cold wind blew over the sea, and the waves fell with heavy thuds upon the sand.

Anthea wrapped her cloak round her, wound her furs more closely about her neck. The wind blew colder and colder, and the gloom deepened. Footsteps sounded on the chalk road, and a woman hurrying up the pathway dropped a newspaper.

The keen wind took it and played with it, and blew it straight to Anthea's feet.

Involuntarily she stooped and picked it up, read the headlines, and saw the name of the mighty ship.

And the mighty ship had gone to its death amid the icebergs, and lay still forever under the ice-cold waters of the Atlanitc.

Anthea read the paper. There was no mention of her husband; if he had been on the steamer surely such a great name would have been mentioned either amongst the lost or saved.

Then she remembered he nearly always traveled under a different name; he hated the "fuss" that his greatness brought.

Holding the paper lightly with her hands, she looked out to sea once more.

There beneath the waters—for all the waters are one water, and the wave that breaks at your feet today broke perhaps on the shores of a coral reef under sunny Indian skies a year ago—there beneath the waters lay perhaps her husband and child.

She stood there, making no note of the passing of time, and the earth grew darker and the wind colder and the boom of the waves below her sounded like the beating out of hope on the shores of eternal separation.

Perhaps it was minutes, perhaps hours, before the shadow began to pass, the strange gloom began to lift, and life came back again into the air. As the darkness passed from the sun, so the darkness lifted

slightly from her soul. She would still hope. She could find out at once, of course, by going to her business manager or his. And she would go to Cherry Blossom Farm to receive the answers.

She left a laughing world of sunshine behind her, and the train carried her past Red Hill and the lovely Surrey country, through Aldershot, and away up to the country where hidden among the hills lies the land of Cherry Isle.

Every poster, every paper, and every tongue spoke only of one thing—the loss of the mighty ship. Nature, mighty Nature, had moved her little finger, and man's work had shriveled up and died.

Anthea came the way which she had come as a young woman more than ten years before.

The sun was beginning to set, the sky was dyed with pale green and purple, and the east wind was blowing with chill sweetness as it always did over Cherry Isle in the spring. Here and there the branches were bearing blossoms, and here and there the dainty buds were blooming, and an undergrowth of green, tender newborn green, covered the pathways.

The celandines, like fallen stars, glistened amidst the foliage, and the cuckoo called from the sunset hills.

She came up the pathway, and over the hill.

Hope was alive within her; she knew that her husband had not sailed; some certain instinct of her being told her so.

On the crest of the hill she paused.

The air was suddenly filled with the notes of an

æolian harp; then, playing as if to accompany it, sounded a violin.

Anthea stood perfectly still; if she walked another few yards the player would be visible.

Then the violin ceased, and sounded again, and her husband's voice spoke in the air.

"Mother's song, my Cherry Blossom? Very well; play softly, Little Poem, and I will sing."

Then she heard him singing, and his voice came to her from under the cherry trees:

'A heart as soft, a heart as kind,
A heart as sound and free,
'As in the whole world thou can'st find
That heart I'll give to thee.
Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me,
'And hast command of every part
To live and die for thee.

Then Anthea, his wife, stood before him, her hair glowing in the sunshine, as it had glowed when he had first seen it, and her eyes wide open. The strange mysterious orbs were filled with love and pleading, and the long white hands were held out to him with a great beseeching.

She did not speak, but, as she stood there, a wind blew a few blossoms down upon her hair.

Charles Garston had been standing as he sang, and for a few moments it seemed to him as if he saw a vision. But when the cherry blossoms floated down-

wards and rested on her head he knew that it was Anthea.

She came to him as though she had never been his before.

Her hands were still outstretched. He sprang forward, and drew her to him until the proud head rested on his shoulder.

Little Julia—child of genius and intuition—stood for a second watching them; then, holding her fiddle, she sprang away down the pathway and disappeared among the cherry trees.

* * * * * * *

A silence, and then the man whispered very low:

"Anthea, is it you—at last?"

She did not lift her head from its resting place on his shoulder, but she answered quickly:

"Herrick, I have wanted you ever since you sent that Marconigram. I had behaved too badly to ask you to come, but I have wanted you and our child."

"Anthea!" his voice was hot with passion again; "if I had only known!"

"Listen, Herrick." She drew herself away, and stood facing him with tragic eyes. "Listen to what I have to say."

"To hear you is music," her husband answered, and would have drawn her to him once more, but she stepped back and spoke quickly:

"Herrick, you do not know; listen!" And then in a few quick sentences she told him everything.

He heard her in silence, and she spared herself not one iota.

"My poor wife!" he said, and that was the whole of his condemnation.

Presently the sound of a violin being played was borne to them, and Anthea, lifting her head from his shoulder, said:

"What a wonderful tone our child brings from her violin!"

"Julia is a rare genius," her father answered proudly. "I must teach you how to understand her, Anthea."

She looked at him quickly, and answered very sedately:

"I have learned the dumb language, Herrick, and I think I shall be able to understand her."

Garston laughed.

"Ah, Anthea," he began, teasingly, but she flushed, and said quickly:

"Now, Herrick, I am going to find, truly find, my daughter. Will you stay here?"

Then she walked slowly away towards the place whence came the sound of music.

And this was the manner of Anthea's entrance into her kingdom of wifehood and motherhood.

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